



# ネトゲの嫁は 女の子じゃないか？ と思った？

Lv. 2

聴猫芝居  
Kinoko shibai  
ill: Hisasi

# Netoge no Yome wa Onnanoko ja Nai to Omotta?

vol.2

by Kineko Shibai

[Novel Updates](#)

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シュヴァイン  
／ 瀬川 茜  
〈せがわあかね〉

ネット上でのシュヴァイン  
火力至上主義のソードダンサー (♂)。  
イケメンの皮を被ったロリ娘、  
というアレゲなスペックの持ち主。

ギルドアレイキッツの酒場 (仮称) の  
ひととき  
セツテ

初期装備であるところを見ると  
どうやら初心者らしい。ルシアン  
を知っているみたいで……？

猫姫

とってもかわいい  
 (一部の) アイドル。猫耳、  
そして語尾は「にゃ」  
……あざといさすが  
猫姫さんあざとい。

アコ  
／ 玉置 亜子  
〈たまきあこ〉

ネット上でのアコ  
見た目至上主義のクレリック (♀)。  
一歩間違えれば姫キャラな情弱少女。  
ネット上の彼女こそが真の姿……？

アプリコット  
／ 御聖院 杏  
〈ごしょういんきょう〉

ネット上でのアプリコット  
課金至上主義の魔法使い (♀)。  
マネーの力によってとてつもない  
強さを……いやこれやっぱ反則だよな？

ルシアン  
／ 西村 英騎  
〈にしむらひでき〉

ネット上でのルシアン  
防具至上主義のアーマーナイト (♂)。  
すごく硬い。チキンな心と裏腹に、  
ますます硬くなっていくばかり。

CHARACTER STATUS >>>>

Lv95	HP/18532	MP/708
Name	Rusian	
Job	Armor Knight	
Sex	Male	
Atk/83+229	Mat/35+9	
Def/107+290	Mdf/76+5	

Lv80	HP/5173	MP/1496
Name	Ako	
Job	Cleric	
Sex	Female?	
Atk/43+90	Mat/146+0	
Def/69+22	Mdf/318+18	

Lv88	HP/12633	MP/459
Name	Schwein	
Job	Sword Dancer	
Sex	Male?	
Atk/158+276	Mat/13+54	
Def/71+101	Mdf/39+10	

Lv96	HP/14622	MP/5946
Name	Apricot	
Job	Law Wizzard	
Sex	Male?	
Atk/73+190	Mat/809+372+18	
Def/86+278	Mdf/262+30	

Lv10	HP/171	MP/31
Name	Sette	
Job	Novice	
Sex	Female?	
Atk/11+45	Mat/12+0	
Def/10+46	Mdf/12+0	

Lv90	HP/17657	MP/2002
Name	Nekohime	
Job	Cardinal	
Sex	Female?	
Atk/42+93	Mat/184+223	
Def/89+47	Mdf/153+25	







【籠城中】玉置亜子・自室にて【来世に賭ける】



「恥の準備を  
したぞやな...」

「なで脱いでなよ！  
準備するってなよ！」



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And you thought  
there is Never  
a girl online?

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# Prologue: The Ambition of Rusian Online

*TL note: Title is a reference to the Ambition of Oda Nobunaga*

This was a time in LA— Legendary Age, when about a year has passed since I started playing.

Even though I immediately left my guild after the trauma of confessing to a GIRL (Guy In Real Life), it really feels lonely to continue playing solo in an online game. Since it came to this, I figured I might as well try playing the game a little more seriously and submitted an application to one of the guilds that seemed “hardcore”.

PVP, Quests and Leveling. They all took those things seriously. That’s the kind of guild it was.

One look at their guildmaster (IGN: †Black Magician†), and you’ll realize how powerful he is, being a male character donning an assortment of shiny equipment that looks like he’s really got it together.

To be honest, I was a bit unnerved by that sight now that I think about it.

Even so, I mustered all the courage I had and this was what had transpired.

**Rusian: Excuse me, I’d like to join the guild...**

**†Black Magician†: Oh, a new member application? Well then, how about a little interview?**

A sudden interview right off the bat.

Huh? Interview? Even though I’m just joining a guild in-game?

I can’t deny that I already wanted to back out at that moment, but I found it hard to bring that up since it would be bad manners so I just stood nervously in front of the guy. Well, it’s only to join a guild in the game so it can’t be that big of a deal right? Yep, I think so.

**†Black Magician†: For starters, how about telling me the games you’ve played before LA?**

You're starting from there!? You're asking about my gaming history!? Is this something like a resume!?

I was so surprised that I almost slipped and fell from my chair. Well, for now, I'll just go along and answer.

**Rusian: LA is my first game so...**

**†Black Magician†: Ah, is that so. This is your first game huh? I see, I see.**

Just what is that reaction? Does it mean good? Or was that bad?

As the person who was talking in front of me seemed to resemble a company executive, my heart started racing.

**†Black Magician†: So then, what do you do in real life?**

You're going to ask about my real life next!? Not something related to game!?

Ah, I see. This is an interview directed towards the person behind the player "Nishimura Hideki" and not the ingame character Rusian. It might be a bit late, but I get it now.

**Rusian: Err...**

**†Black Magician†: Ah, it's not as if I'm asking for your occupation. What I just want to know is, your login schedule, how serious you are with the game, stuff like that.**

Even if you ask me how serious I am with the game, a game is just a game after all. Nothing more and nothing less.

**Rusian: I'm a student so I can play from evening onwards.**

**†Black Magician†: Ah, you're not in college are you? Probably high school or something lower right? You're probably the type that when it's time for dinner you'll have to drop out, or when the bath is ready you'll drop out too. And when it comes to late at night you probably can't log in, that sort of thing. In our guild, you'll always find someone online. But when we start farming, it's our style to continue farming for about three hours without stopping so having someone suddenly drop out in the middle of it is kind of a bother.**

**Rusian: Ah, I see.**

Uwah, I'm definitely going to be rejected! He just completely dismissed the way of life of a typical student!

Is it weird? Am I the odd one here? Scary! This guild is really intimidating!

**†Black Magician†:** I'm not saying it's bad. It's just that it would be hard to find fun in playing together when our play styles don't match since it would entail that we would have to be needlessly watching out for the other. I just thought you might be able to find other guilds that are better suited to your play style.

**Rusian:** I see...

This was only supposed to be a conversation about me wanting to join a guild, but it feels like I was getting lectured by my teacher. Just what kind of guild is too hard for a normal student I wonder.

I probably failed the interview anyway, so I should just do as I please and leave already. With those feelings in mind, I carelessly typed away at the keyboard.

**Rusian:** Then if I quit school then I'll probably fit in with you guys huh? lol

**†Black Magician†:** You're definitely not wrong there. lol

I said that like it was a joke and †Black Magician†-san just laughed back at me as he answered.

Oh, so he wasn't completely serious about all of that before. And when I was just feeling relieved thinking that...

**†Black Magician†:** But, hmm, let's see... There are several people in our guild who quit their jobs or school for the sake of playing net games and everyone seems to be having fun.

He goes ahead and says that.

What the heck is that? Scary.

†Black Magician†-san kept directing his unperturbed smile at me, who was frozen stiff, and continued talking.

**†Black Magician†:** Ah, could you also tell me about your main character's

level, job, gear, life skill level, PVP score and your progress on the questlines?

**Rusian: E, excuse me!**

**†Black Magician†: Eh, what? Hey, wait—?**

I ran away. Of course I ran away.

I'm never going anywhere near the gathering spot for that guild again.

It's clear enough that we both live in different worlds. I knew that much.

It was this incident that made me realize I cannot survive in this game if I keep playing like this.

**Rusian: I still shudder when I think back on it. Now, I'm just glad that I met my current comrades.**

**Ako: So Rusian has his fair share of troubles too...**

As soon as she finished hearing my story, Ako said that as she sympathized with me with her eyes downcast.

**Rusian: You see? Aren't those hardcore players are really scary? This is why you shouldn't thoughtlessly go with people you don't know.**

**Ako: But my level increased by three. And I even received this cute equip.**

**Rusian: This is exactly what happens that's why I told you it's not good!**

Even under normal circumstances, you already possess the characteristics needed for princess play!

*TL note: Princess play is a playstyle where you create a female character so that male players would feel inclined to give this type of character special treatment e.g. protecting them from enemy attacks, giving them items, using heals on them first, etc.*

That's right. In the world of LA, my "Waifu" Ako, was taken around by other girl characters who were dressed very cute (according to her story), brought to a high level farming spot where she proceeded to cause trouble for them, and then ended up getting a lot of experience in the process, in addition to being showered with items before coming back here.

**Ako: But they were really nice people. They even explained to me the**

monster's weaknesses, a trick on how to better operate my controls and all sorts of stuff.

**Rusian:** So, did you understand any of it?

**Ako:** Nope, not at all!

Of course right—

If it's just those things, I've already explained them to you enough. But no matter what, you always end up doing as you always do, don't you?

**Ako:** By the way Rusian, how were you after that incident? They didn't follow you around and bully you, did they?

As if something that stupid would happen. Stuff such as bullying doesn't happen often in net games.

Actually, it was even the other way around.

**Rusian:** Those guys looked for me afterwards. They said that even though I couldn't join the guild, we're still fellow gamers playing the same game so if I ever had trouble, I could come to them anytime. After that, I received a lot of help from them on my quests.

**Ako:** Weren't they all good people then!

Yeah, they were really good people! They were really strong too, and knew just about everything! I'm absolutely convinced that I could never become like that!

**Rusian:** That's why I respect those real hardcore players. And it's not like I'm bad at dealing with them but just like he said, I believe people are better off playing with somebody that matches their own play style. It doesn't really matter if you play alone, but if you're playing in a group, it's really hard if you're not accustomed to each other's play styles.

Play style is really important. Forcing yourself to play with someone who just doesn't match up with your style is just brewing tragedy.

For example, let's see, an event where a PVP-focused player and a life-skill player are forced to face off under the pretext of Valentine's would never come to pass.

I mean, this could very well lead to the valuable life-skill players to quitting!

**Ako:** I know what you mean. If it were me, I would be tired after seriously playing for a few hours.

Of course you would be. When we're out farming, you just sitting down and chatting for an hour is pretty commonplace in our guild, Alley Cats. There's no way you could desperately keep up hunting with those hardcore players.

**Rusian:** And that's why you shouldn't be carelessly going along with strange people. If you feel like you can get along with them, that's fine. But if you feel like something's off, immediately head on back. Understand?

**Ako:** Okaaaay. —but you don't need to worry about me, I'll always be by Rusian's side you know? I even properly explained to that person that I'm married to Rusian so farming as a pair is not possible.

**Rusian:** I'm not really worried about that though.

**Ako:** Isn't that a bit cruel!?

**Rusian:** I trust Ako after all.

This much is true. Even if they'd proposed, there's no reason to not trust Ako.

On the other hand, I actually have to take care as to not increase the number of Ako's victims.

Up until now, persistent whispers (private message) from the trap players that Ako played with saying, "Break up with Ako!" kept popping up in my screen. I refuse to let it get worse than this. Argh, the notification sounds are really noisy.

**Ako:** But, that was kind of nice, wasn't it?

**Rusian:** Nice? What was?

While I was busy closing these annoying PM windows that I kept getting, Ako spoke as she flashed a smile.

**Ako:** Just like that Black Magician-san said, quitting school and everything and just living to play games is like a dream isn't it?

**Rusian:** And then what? Are you planning for me to provide for you?

**Ako: How did you know?**

**Rusian: So I got that right! I won't do that! Seriously, keep trying hard for your future's sake!**

**Ako: My future dream is to be a housewife though...**

**Rusian: I don't plan on denying you your dream but I don't have the ability to allow that kind of dependency!**

**Ako: Eeeh...**

Even if you say it in such a sad voice, what's impossible is impossible.

Really, this girl is just hopeless in a number of ways. Seriously.

—And that was the conversation we had before, three days after the official start of the operation of the Modern Electronic Communications Game Club. At the time I didn't really think much of it, but thinking about it this time around made me feel like I was being given a glimpse of something.

A glimpse of what you say? What else could it be but the blunder that's going to be caused by my "Waifu".



女中隠す大泣きおふん。

1冊

And you thought there is Never a girl online?



# Chapter 1: Are You A Closet Otaku?

*TL Note: This is a reference to the party game 'Are You A Werewolf?' by Looney Labs which is played using cards and plays similar to Mafia.*

## Part 1

“This is bad. I’ve really done it now.”

Right now was a scheduled break in between classes.

In front of the vending machine, which was beside the currently deserted school store, I was shaken up by the current state of things.

“I forgot to bring my wallet didn’t I?”

I came all this way to the vending machine just to not have my wallet with me.

As I checked the both the right and left pocket of my pants, there was no wallet to be found.

Actually, now that I think about it, I have the feeling I just left it lying at home.

Also, I remember that I already realized that I left it when I was just about to leave home.

“But I didn’t even care that much about leaving it. There had to be reason why I thought it would work itself out and just decided to go to school. Uh, what was it again...”

The reason I’d be fine going to school even without a wallet was probably because..... Ah, that’s right. When I left home, I was thinking this.

“Ah, school is pretty far so I’ll probably encounter some monster I can defeat along the way and that’ll get me enough money for a meal.”

“As if that would happen!”

With all of my energy, I took a jab at myself for the event that had happened

earlier.

I'm not in the game so that kind of absurdity just couldn't pass. Also, did I just really just go to school thinking that?

I can't buy it. I can't even buy juice.

A monster didn't appear after all. Even if it did, I'd die.

"...Guess I'll head back."

As if anyone would be willing to lend me money after hearing this stupid story. I should just give up on it.

Yep, I'll just have to make do with tap water for the day. As for lunch... I wonder if Ako made me anything.

As I turned around while thinking that— Oh, someone seems to be walking this way.

Those downcast eyes, that meek attitude while walking... that face covered by her bangs... was the figure of a person that I was quite used to seeing.

"Heeey, Ako?"

"...? Ah, Russian!"

She suddenly raised her head in reaction to my voice. Looking at my direction was someone I was used to seeing, Ako.

I could only see her feet for about three seconds before she suddenly skipped over here. As she did, her expression began to softly relax.

"To think that we would meet in a place like this, this must be fate!"

"Having a fateful encounter in front of a vending machine is not something to be happy about. Also, stop calling me Russian."

I'd prefer if our wonderful fated meeting would have occurred somewhere a little more romantic.

"So, what's up? Are you getting a drink at a time like this?"

"That's kind of it but it's not just that."

"That's not all?"

“It was kind of tough staying in class, so I thought I could go buy a drink as an excuse to escape from the classroom.”

“...I, I see. Hang in there.”

Serious. Your reason for going here is way too serious, Ako.

Make some friends will you... was something I couldn't word in a different way so I just gave a vague nod.

“I mean, this Real Life Offline Game is a shitty game. The stats you start out with are completely random, you can't just use the skills you want, and you have no control over stat allocation. But most of all, don't all the players seem to be way too hardcore!? It's too much that casual players like me don't even seem like they'll be able to take part! Don't you think so too!?”

“Well, it's offline so it should be somewhat inconvenient.”

“I'm probably the only one experiencing lag that's why I'm not really good at it.”

“This is the first time I heard someone lagging in real life.”

I don't really mind about her own self evaluation but I think the meaning that Ako seems to be a bit slow when it comes to anything she does is true.

“Well, let's just leave it at that. If you're going to buy something, go ahead and buy it already.”

“Okay. Let's see, if I get something in a plastic bottle to take back, even though I went alone, it wouldn't look like I actually had no business to do outside. Yup, let's go with that.”

I'm telling you, your current situation is way too serious.

As she was about to hand over something to the vending machine, she stopped and instead reached for her skirt pocket and proceeded to take out her tiny purse. As she opened it—

“...Ah.”

She suddenly stopped moving as she uttered that.

“What's the matter?”

“Oh that’s right. I forgot to put money in my wallet.”

Seemingly surprised at her own situation, Ako stared in wonder.

Actually, shouldn’t I be the one surprised here?

“How can you not remember the contents of your own wallet?”

“No, no that’s not it. I did remember my wallet having nothing at all inside of it.”

Then why did you come all the way to the vending machine? Well, there was no need for that kind of joke, as Ako already started tapping her wallet for the contents.

“It’s just that, I thought I could sell some unneeded items in my school inventory so I could get enough to buy a juice so I went to the school store but...”

“...Yeah.”

“When I thought about it, the school store doesn’t really buy items, do they—and when I thought about it some more, I also figured, oh I also don’t have any items. This wasn’t the game after all.”

“...That’s right.”

I feel like I’ve heard something like this before.

Is it that? The longer you stay with your spouse, the more you seem alike, that kind of thing.

“W, what do I do now?”

Ako looked at me in a fluster.

Yeah, if it’s just juice I would have wanted to be at least able to buy it for you.

“Sorry, I forgot to bring my own wallet as well.”

“Eeh? Then why did Rusian go to the school store?”

“...I thought I could hunt some monster on the way to school to get some money.”

“.....Ehehehehe.”

“Hey, stop it! We were just being stupid together! It’s not something to be happily snuggling me for!”

‘I guess we really think alike—’, is a weird reason to be happy about so stop it!

Being tightly embraced by Ako and having her push hard into my body while it unexpectedly felt really good— was not what I was I thinking, but I still had to desperately hold myself back. The game and reality are different. This kind of conduct is not suited for a girl who I just met a few days ago!

“What the heck are you two doing?”





“Oh?”

As I turned around to the source of that exasperated voice, there stood the figure of Segawa, looking a bit tired.

“Ah, Schew-chan also came.”

“I told you to stop it with the Schew-chan.”

Segawa, who was playing the part of a closet otaku, would scowl at anyone if she got called by her ingame character’s name.

But when you look at it, there’s no other students going to the vending machine during this short break. The surroundings were completely deserted so Segawa approached the front of the vending machine without getting mad.

“I barely made it in time, running to school, so I had to take classes while I was really thirsty. Ah really, just what have I done. That was a huge mistake.”

“Come to think of it, you arrived just right after our teacher came in the classroom, didn’t you?”

“That’s right. I might have been in trouble if our adviser wasn’t Nekohime-sensei, you

*meow?* Is what she’d probably say.”

“Don’t you dare say that in front of Saitou-sensei, she’s going to hit you a lariat.”

Segawa brushed it off as if saying, ‘it’s fine, it’s fine’, while gulping down a bottle of tea. Hey, that’s a pretty manly way of drinking.

“Pwha! I feel revived!”

“Schew-chan, Schew-chan, if you don’t need that plastic bottle, can I have it?”

“...What are you going to use it for?”

Segawa suspiciously asked her. Well you see, she’s going to be using it to show off that she went out during the break to buy a drink. Don’t ask and just give it to her already.

“C, come to think of it, you coming in late is pretty rare. Did something happen? Did you end up staying up too late while farming last night?”

“There was a weapon I just really wanted to buy so I went to farm solo. Because of that, I ended up oversleeping— And then you see, well, it’s a bit of a stupid story.”

Segawa handed Ako the empty plastic bottle as she said that while forcing a smile.

“When I woke up, I immediately realized that it was pretty late but, ‘Aah, if it’s just this late, I can probably make it in time to the train station by using a teleport gem. As expected from my bad self, being late is just not possible.’ was the kind of stupid thing I was thinking so I took my time to get ready. Since I did all of that, it’s kind of expected that I was going to be late.”

“.....”

“.....”

As if saying, ‘I really did something stupid didn’t I?’, Segawa laughed while we remained speechless.

“...Why are you two suddenly quiet?”

“Ah no...”

“That’s...”

I’m sorry, we’re also the same.

I mean, you’re probably better off than us since you at least have money on you when you came here.

In that moment, a fourth voice, who seemed to be watching us from behind, called out to us.

“What’s this you guys? It seems you’ve all gathered here.”

“Ah, Master.”

Even Master unexpectedly came here. The Modern Electronic Communications Game Club— that’s not it, the guild, Alley Cats, has gathered in this place.

“Our timings just happened to be perfectly be in sync. Master..... err, what’s with you too Ms. President? The second year classrooms are pretty far from here right? You would go to the trouble of coming to the school store during this short break?”

Master solemnly nodded at Akane’s words.

“Yes, this circumstance was something beyond my control.”

That elegant face showed a bitter expression as if she had a grave matter on her hands. From what has happened so far, my gut tells me this is probably something worthless. To be honest, I don’t really want to hear it but one couldn’t help but ask at this point. Just in case, I’ll at least ask about it.

“So, that circumstance is?”

“I am glad you have asked. First of all, when you talk of a ‘drink’ at school, it can be a beverage you brought from home, something from the water fountain or from the sports club-only taps that provide cool water. Listen carefully, primarily these things are free to procure. In other words, they are ‘Basic’. — Are you following me so far?”

“Well that’s true.”

Ako would nod from time to time.

But wait, just wait a minute, something’s off here. Her choice of words are clearly strange.

“Hey, I’m already getting a bad feeling about this.”

“...To be honest, me too.”

I knew Segawa would have the same impression.

The moment Master’s “Basic” was uttered, was the time I knew that I had a bad feeling about this.

“Well, listen first. So, to compare with the ‘Basic’ tap water, the stuff from the vending machine near the school store requires you to pay. Instead of drinking normal tap water you can get without paying, you can pay an additional fee and procure higher quality drinks— that is in other words, ‘Premium’. Am I not mistaken?”

I knew it was about that kind of thing!

“I see, I was not able to come to that kind of conclusion!”

“More like you never needed that kind of conclusion.”

Why is my wife always bright eyed in delight of these otherworldly logic? Just what was it about the topic that struck a chord with her? As always, I have no idea.

“Well then, I believe you’ve already gotten it now that I’ve explained it this far.”

I don’t get it. Master then proceeded without delay, avoiding our gaze.

“It was based on that premise and something that happened during the first period. As I was listening seriously in class, I can remember my throat suddenly feeling parched. I thought to myself, ‘Ah, I would like to drink the lemon tea that they sell in the vending machine’. And when I thought about it, I couldn’t help but feel like I just had to get a taste of it. It was like my throat was only able to accept lemon tea from that point on. Don’t you think so too?”

“At the very least, I won’t say that it’s not available.”

“Is that so!”

Master, who kept nodding her head as if she felt her meaning got across, vigorously answered Segawa, who was saying the former with a fed up expression.

“I would like you all to think about it. No matter what the game, a system where you could always buy premium items from anywhere is a given. If you wanted to buy something, you can always buy it right away. Even if you don’t plan on buying anything, the Purchase button is always there, taunting you. It’s that kind of thing.”

Of course, over there they receive payment using those things, so it’s normal that the net games using those microtransaction models design it to be so unnecessarily easy to use.

“And so, I thought of buying it from where I was. Why you say? Because that lemon tea is this school’s ‘Premium’ item. Being able to buy it anytime should

be no problem, was what I thought. —That is until, hear me out here and be surprised. Somehow, I couldn't buy it while I was in class! I couldn't buy that 'Premium' item. Isn't that weird? I couldn't purchase a premium item when I wanted to. Is this inconvenience even allowed? It was totally unpleasant. Never before have I felt such displeasure. However, I am also an adult. So as I contained that feeling of rage in my chest, accepting that inconvenient things will be inconvenient, I took on the trouble of carrying my legs over and that is why I am here."

Master said that as she nodded while she puffing out her chest.

If my memory serves me right, this person is supposedly really smart but, yeah, there's no doubt it.

This person's an idiot.

She's definitely an idiot.

"—and I think I'll leave the jokes there. We'll have club activities later today as always. Each of you should properly take your lessons and come to the club room afterwards. Got it?"

"It would be nice if all that was really a joke."

"Of course it is. Isn't it obvious that I just thought up that silly thing and went with it."

So you actually thought about it.

Master, who was smiling at me when I was giving her an astounded look, went to buy her lemon tea and went back to her own class gracefully.

"Oh right, Rusian! Wouldn't it have been okay to borrow some money from Master?"

"Ah, now that you say it. That could've worked."

Of course, these kind of stupid things are something I can only talk about with my guild members.

But Master has already left, so it can't be helped.

"I'll just give up and put up with water for now."

“I see... I also already have the plastic bottle I need to fool my classmates with.”

Don't say such sad things.

“Like I said before, just what did the two of you come here to do?”

“.....”

“.....”

While Segawa was looking at us with questioning eyes, we, as a couple, proceeded to avert our look from her gaze.

“Isn't it getting worse?”

This was during our club activities for that day. In the Modern Electronics Communications Game Club's clubroom, after hearing the details of what happened that morning, Saitou-sensei shook her head in dejection.

“It's not just Tamaki-san but all of you as well. Even I don't like using the term 'Game brain' but it's because things like this happen that it becomes a concern.”

“That's what you call needless anxiety, Ms. Saitou.”

“Rather than reassuring me, that confidence just makes me more uneasy... Let's see, let me ask you all a question. When a person dies, what happens?”

Ah, is that it. Recently, some students answered that 'Even if I die, I will just revive' when asked that ridiculous question. Even if it's us, there's no way we're going to make that same mistake.

To our teacher, who was a bit uneasy about being impolite to us, we confidently provided our answer.

“When you die, you go back to your save point.”

“And then you lose EXP.”

“Your equipment durability also decreases.”

“Rusian gets a little mad.”

Me, Master, Segawa, and Ako answered in that order.

That was undoubtedly the perfect answer— And no Ako, that's only when you mess up your controls and let me die. I'm not always mad when it happens you know?

“Haaa...”

Our teacher who was looking at us with bright eyes gave out a sigh.

“All of you, are you answering this seriously?”

“There's no way we're taking this seriously when we answered right after you asked right?”

“Well I see that, but if something like the incident today happens again, I'll be troubled. If a time comes when your life is really in peril and you think just for a moment ‘Ah, this is fine’, you won't be able to take that back you know?”

Ugh. Even if I get told that, there's no way I can definitely say that it won't happen.

I can definitely imagine a scenario in real life where when my life is fading away, I start thinking to myself ‘Ah, I'm going to die... Where was my savepoint again?’.

By the way, the cause of death for that scenario was me being stabbed by Ako.

‘I'll kill Rusian and then kill myself!’ is what she'd say before jumping on me.

An event like that actually recently happened, but there's no way right? There's no way Ako would stab me right? Hahaha, hahahahaha.

“Ako, you wouldn't stab me right?”

“Eh... It can't be. Rusian, are you planning on cheating on me!?”

So you'll stab me if I cheat on you!?

I won't do such a thing! We don't have that kind of relationship in the first place!

“I think it's better to disband this club sooner and have everyone quit playing online games. Distancing everyone from the internet and having a healthy student life would be—”

Master smiled at our teacher, who was earnestly saying this to us, as she said.

“That would be a big problem you *meow*?”

“—Well then, make sure you keep at it in today’s club activities as well. Sensei has a meeting to attend to so I’m going.”

Our teacher said that as she left the room without allowing her serious expression to crumble one bit. The sight of her back looked even smaller than it normally was or was I imagining it?

It would be nice if she wouldn’t put in any bad words for us during the meeting. But when I think about Saitou-sensei’s difficult position, I couldn’t help but shed a tear. When Nekohime-san gets back, I’ll console her.

“Nekohime-sensei sure has it rough.”

“And we’re entirely to blame for that.”

Contrary to what she just said, Segawa didn’t really seem to sympathize with our teacher.

Also, stop it with the Nekohime-sensei. If you say that out loud in the classroom she would probably turn into ash. And along with that, your hobby of playing net games would also be exposed leading to both of you burning out.

“However, even though our club was created to prevent Ako from confusing games and reality, it seems to have worsened the situation. Aah, it seems that our reason for having the club still continue on.”

“Why do you look like you’re that happy about it Master?”

It seems that Master has a lot of things in store for us, as a huge smile showed on her face. It didn’t look like she was regretting it one bit.

“That’s not true at all, I’m making progress as well. Recently, even when I call Rusian Rusian, the number of times he gets mad has been fewer.”

“From just that one statement we can see you’re already contradicting yourself.”

You talking about me? That’s not really about me getting called by my ingame name, that’s just about me not getting mad at Ako.

“Ako, that’s not you making progress at all. Rather, it’s your training of Nishimura that’s making progress.”

“Don’t call it training. Getting used to it, or getting accustomed to it, there are a lot of better ways to put it.”

“They all mean the same thing though.”

It’s not the same. It’s not the same at all. At least it isn’t to me, in the psychological sense. Saying I was supposed to reform Ako but somehow ended up getting trained by her is a joke I can’t accept. I’m certain that’s not the case here at all.

“Hey, isn’t that right Ako?”

“What is it Rusian?”

Ako was staring blankly at me as she answered.

That response didn’t feel off but even so, it’s still no good.

“It’s not Rusian, it’s Nishimura-kun. Now say it like that.”

“What is it Nishimura-kun?”

While looking up towards me, she tilted her head a little as she said this.

Ah, what’s this? This feels a bit different from before. Just what is it, this sensation? It doesn’t feel off. It’s like a feeling of nervousness when a girl you know well suddenly changes how they address you. To be honest, it’s a bit heart-pounding— NOT! I’m the one in the right here!

“Calm down me, keep it cool... The game and reality are different, the game and reality are different.”

“Rusian? What’s the matter?”

“The sleeve, don’t pull on the sleeve.”

It’s cute so don’t do that.

Master and Segawa left us flirting like that and went to their seats.

“Leaving that topic aside, what do you say we get started on our club activities? At any rate, today’s update has added new premium items in the

game, so I for one am very excited.”

“Master is probably the only one who would be excited about an update that did nothing but add new premium items...”

To Segawa, who had a bitter expression on her face, Master curiously replied.

“What are you saying. Today’s update has a new gacha implemented. Anyone would be excited about that.”

“When you say gacha, it’s that thing where you put in money and you get an item in the game right? Don’t tell me you roll for it?”

“Of course. What else do you think it does?”

When you say gacha, it’s just as Segawa said. You sink real money into it to get a random item ingame, is what everyone generally criticizes as its function. For basically free to play games, this serves as the main source of revenue. There’s also cases where a monthly fee is present but premium items also exist. This is what’s a so-called hybrid business model which has these items as an additional source of revenue.

For the record, I don’t do gacha. I have no money after all, and it feels like a waste.

“No way, gacha is just out of the question.”

“I have never done this thing called gotcha as well.”

‘It seems like a waste of money’, is what Ako said, looking troubled.

“What nonsense are you spouting! Listen here, gachas, for just a small amount of money, allow you to chase your dreams! It’s the hope of every single net game player!”

Master said that all fired up.....But, fundamentally, it just causes despair.

“I won’t be doing gacha either, it’s just ridiculous.”

“Y, you fool..... Look at today’s gacha. Just for today, for a 24-hour limited period, there’s a very, very, very! high boost to the rate that you’ll get your coveted items!”

What’s the deal with that very 3x. That smells really fishy.

“That’s probably that isn’t it? It’s not the item you want that you’ll get, but other items with the same rates as it will be the one you keep getting, that kind of event.”

“What are you saying! The management team could not be mistaken! Making fun of this festival is not allowed!”

That pointless vigor is somewhat scary.

“Uhm, uhm!”

Suddenly, Ako was raising her hand as if she was trying to get called.

“Master, I don’t have money but I’d like to try gacha as well!”

“Oh! As expected of Ako, you show great promise! Alright, I’ll send some funds towards Ako’s account.”

Seriously!? Then I want to do it too! I want to try the gacha at least once!

“Wait, wait, wait. If that’s the case, I’d like to try it too!”

“You guys, do you have any pride at all!?”

How rude. It’s not like I’m trying to sponge off of Master.

Even though I said I wasn’t interested, I would want to at least try it once after all.

“It’s fine, it’s fine. No matter what item I get, I’ll be sure to hand it over to Master.”

“If that’s the case then...”

“Eh?”

“...Eh?”

Ako turned her face away, as if she’d just heard something unbelievable.

“Wait a minute, it looks like your wife is in this for the treat.”

“Hey now Ako, I don’t remember having such a shameless wife.”

“No, no, that was not my intention, at all, either?”

Her attitude of avoiding eye contact and broken speech just serves to

heighten my doubt.

During this time, Master just finished charging our accounts and began raising her mouse in the air as she let out a voice of elation.

“Alright we’re going to start rolling everyone! Today marks the start of the Net Game Club’s 100 consecutive gacha opening tradition!”

“Yeah, let’s do this!”

“Master, you look really coooool!”

“Hey, don’t start making traditions out of nonsensical things— And you two! Stop encouraging her!”

“Why didn’t any rare items come out when it was my turn? I demand a do-over.”

“You can only ask your real life luck about that...”

I was consoling the depressed Ako on our way home.

The result of the very, very, very high boost rate gacha event was that Ako did not pull any useful items at all. If you think about it, the odds of such a thing happening is near impossible. At first, we just laughed it off but as it progressed towards the middle, we started to turn a bit pale.

‘You’ll get one for sure! Next time! It’s okay, see? How about you keep trying at it?’

Was what Schew said to Ako when this was happening. Though, it was kind of amusing to see Schew, who was so adverse to gachas, desperately trying to follow up on what was happening by trying to get Ako to roll some more.

“This is just like how my life is, isn’t it. I keep getting bad draws here and there. This is just what I think, but it’s like this is a special difficulty setting only made for me. It’s like when a game gets localized here in Japan and you compare it to its original version. As a result of localization, it ended up being even harder than it originally was to the point that I can’t even feel pain anymore.”

*TL Note: Renting games in Japan is illegal. For this reason, if a game is to be localized, it could be purposefully made harder to make you have a longer time*

*playing it. This in turn could justify buying the game as you wouldn't be able to finish it in a short amount of time, removing the possibility that you could finish the game just by renting it.*

"It's fine, everyone's life is equally hard."

"Life is a shitty game... I'd like to dropout..."

"Let's go at it for a little longer, okay?"

Needless to say, I already know that Real Life Offline is a shitty game, but even so.

In short, today's activity of the Modern Electronics Communication Game Club was business as usual with Ako remaining unchanged.

In other words, we barely made any progress.

It's been a few days since the incident where Ako tried to stab Sensei and yelled out 'Rusian move away or else I can't kill her!'.

Contrary to the huge shock I experienced during that time, it seems the only change to my daily life was from 'Getting back home from school to play net games' to 'Play net games at school and play some more when I get home'.

Continuing on like that, I even got the addition of nice event where I get to go home, walking side by side with a girl.

"If my luck status was only higher... If my luck was only higher, I feel like I can go on living."

But that girl, Ako, was not someone you could call normal girl.

There's no way you could engage in a deep conversation about net games with a female high school student after all—.

"But in net games, there's no real point to allocating stats to luck besides those leftover points right?"

"Don't you think it kind of increases the chance of a rare drop?"

"Do you even have the willpower to keep running around an instanced dungeon with only full luck gear on, Ako?"

"That goes without saying!"

Says Ako, finally loosening up as she smiled.

Don't you think the reason why nothing good happens is because you don't put effort into it? The reason why your character is able to level up is because you put all that time into playing net games after all.

"But you know, the part where you can just leisurely play and get stronger is one of the good things in net games."

"If you did that in real life, you end up weaker, right?"

That's the weird thing about Real Life Offline.

If you leave it alone, somehow, your stats keep getting lower on their own.

"Come to think of it, if I could only see my level and skills I would be a lot more motivated. Like if it let me know when my intelligence or vitality has increased."

"And, and, you could see the communication skill in your unacquired skill list right."

"Skill Acquisition Quest please!"

I feel like it's going to be hopeless if I don't get it soon! Since if I don't acquire this skill, no matter what I do, my current level isn't going to rise!

"But are our stats actually measured in numbers by things like the sports tests and the school exams, aren't they?"

"That's not the real me."

"Is that how it goes—."

I understand it, but I refuse to accept it. But certainly, numbers don't lie.

As we both sighed, Ako said.

"But I understand too. That I have to do better. I keep causing Russian trouble after all."

"I don't mind the part about you causing me trouble though."

Even though I said we weren't progressing, I know Ako is working hard in her own way.

The way she treats the real me and 'Rusian' ingame is still not yet cured, but it's because of that that she's able to put in the effort in working hard together with me. She's even been coming to school properly recently.

The problem is that, even though you think you'd like to work hard from now on, after a while, you end up thinking 'Nah, it's fine', is a disposition that we both share.

“Even better would be an option to give up on life, right?”

“Don’t go forcibly adding new choices if they’re not available.”

You shouldn't throw away your life.

“Why am I not allowed to throw away real world! The Internet, our second world, is just right there! Isn’t the second one just fine!”

"I love the Ako that aims for the top."

“I hate it when I feel like doing my best just because you’re treating me so nice—!”

I love that part of you though, Ako. But I won't say it.

“How about we buy some twin popsicles and head on home?”

“We’ll each share a piece right.”

“Yep. Just like a real normie.”

Ako's eyes were shining as she straightened her back.

I'm not really one who could proudly boast about himself to others, but having Ako better herself as we make progress together is a pretty nice thing, is what I secretly thought to myself.

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## Part 2

**Rusian: So, are you guys going to farm today?**

On the same old seat, at the same old cafe, in the same old town, my fully-gearred character Rusian said that while checking on my guild members' current states.

**Schwein: Ah— My bad self will have to pass. After all, I've already played as hard as I can when we were at the club.**

**Ako: If I can take it easy while playing with Rusian then I'll go—**

I quickly moved to the side when Ako tried to languidly lean on me. This girl, who suddenly tumbled over, began to look up towards me with a reproachful gaze. It's only during moments like this that she unnecessarily perfects her control of her movements.

**Rusian: Everyone's slacking off.**

**Apricot: Well, I kind of understand what everyone's thinking.**

Master, who was pretty energetic compared to the rest, said that as she gave a wry smile.

Come to think of it, I wonder if this is one of harmful effects of proceeding with our club activities. After we're done with our club and have gone home, our will to play would've just decreased. Up until now, whenever I was in school, I would think 'I want to play more!'. And then, when I'm finally home, that feeling of wanting to play would already be overflowing so much that I would be playing at max tension. 'So that I can play net games, I would do my best in school', it was that kind of thing.

But now, I've been recently burning out all that tension in the club before going home. Because of these extreme club activities, just like a sports-oriented student, I end burning myself out in club and when I get home I'm in full sage mode.

*TL Note: Sage Mode is a state of mind reached when you're able to think clearly and are completely free from desire (usually pertained to time after an*

orgasm)

As a result, when I login to the game, my mood is just something like ‘I guess I’ll just take it easy today’.

**Schwein: Aaah, damn it, I’m still missing 300K for today’s quota. But I don’t wanna go farm. Hm, mm, tch... Hey Rusian, go earn some gold for me in my place my man.**

**Rusian: Go earn it on your own, by yourself.**

How do you even go about asking others to farm for you.

Asking others to farm for you is just the pinnacle of laziness.

**Schwein: But bro, wasn’t there a time where you leveled Ako by having her lazily chatting away while you were farming?**

**Ako: Ah, I start drooling just remembering that. If we can, I’d like to do that again.**

**Rusian: How about you start taking this game seriously?**

You shouldn’t get used to a situation in a net game where a partner would go ahead and powerlevel you while you sit still in a safe corner and wait.

**Schwein: That’s settled then. This game is over for my bad self today.**

**Ako: There’s Schew-chan’s declaration of game over.**

**Apricot: Please look forward to Schwein-sama’s next adventure.**

Schew looks like she’s really going to leave. Is this alright?

Schwein, who looked like she was being one-sidedly forced to leave, said with a big yawn.

**Schwein: Speaking of game over, it’s almost time for tests, isn’t it?**

That sounds more like a declaration of a game over in real life.

**Apricot: Indeed. As we can’t lose face to our adviser, we have to make sure our grades don’t drop.**

**Rusian: A pretty real conversation just started up ingame.**

**Ako: Te, test...**

Ah, someone froze up.

I know it's a depressing topic but is it really enough to make you speechless?

**Rusian: Come to think of it, how are your grades holding up Ako?**

**Ako: It's bad you know? Did you think I was doing fine?**

D, don't ask me that.

It was such a swift answer that it even surprised me. And she even gave off the feeling of being mad despite being in the wrong. It's at these times that I really feel like Ako is fundamentally dangerous.

**Schwein: Specifically how bad are you talking here? If you want, I can even tutor you.**

**Ako: To make it easier to understand, it's bad enough that I can start calling Rusian my senpai.**

**Rusian: Isn't that extremely bad...**

Still, repeating the year is terrible. The thought I had that we would get used to school together and go together on that field trip would all end up in us experiencing it separately.

**Ako: But it was kind of a dream of mine to call Rusian senpai. What do you think, senpai?**

**Rusian: That's, you...**

If you ask me, just imagining Ako with upturned eyes calling me 'Senpai  
≡' ...

**Rusian: ...That sounds kind of nice.**

**Ako: I understand! Just leave it to me!**

**Apricot: Hey now, I'm not going to permit my club member to repeat a year.**

I, it's fine, it's fine. I wasn't being serious.

Even I wouldn't allow that sort of thing.

**Schwein: Not to brag but, I'm not even below the average for our year.**

Schew proudly boasted. Hey, hold on. Why don't you explain just what part of that was something worth bragging about.

**Apricot:** Since we're doing that, I don't mean mean to brag as well but I've never fallen below the single digit rankings for my year.

**Ako:**

**Ako:**

**Ako:**

**Ako:**

**Ako:**

**Ako:**

**Ako:**

**Rusian:** Calm down Ako. It's annoying so stop moving up the chat with blank spaces!

You're going to get shouted at by the passersby!

**Ako:** But they're the elite you know? Members of the elite are here, you know? If I get rid of them won't I rise in rank? Shouldn't I just eliminate them all?

**Rusian:** Your rank won't change if you start counting from below so just stop it.

**Ako:** Uu...

Ako dejectedly gave up.

**Apricot:** You guys still have it better, you can hold a study meeting since you're all in the same year. I'm all alone you know, all alone. I study for the tests, alone. And when the test results are given back, the whole class is all livened up while I'm looking at my results, alone. While all my other classmates are busy having fun comparing their scores, I'm just there computing my average, grinning to myself, alone. Do you know how empty that feels? And you still say I won over you?

H, how miserable!

The student council president is undoubtedly respected by everyone, but in response to Master's story, who in reality did not have a single close friend, Ako answered with a single statement.

**Ako: I took the last test in the infirmary alone.**

**Apricot: Sorry, it's my loss.**

**Rusian: Just what...**

**Schwein: That's just cruel...**

That decisive statement had way too much power.

Ako, that statement was a force surpassing the ultimate weapon. It's a lethal weapon that you shouldn't be carelessly throwing around.

That also reminds me, the subject matter of tests are just too trivial. Like, make the test contents actually more suited for students.

**Rusian: Ah, it would be great if the tests just asked questions about the game. A lizard wolf's race and element is? That sort of thing.**

**Schwein: Its race is Animal and the element is Fire Level 2.**

**Rusian: Correct. Schew gets 5 points.**

**Schwein: This question too easy for my bad self.**

As expected of an elite, their standards are just way different.

Even if it was an easy question, the way she answered right away was wonderful.

**Ako: Uhm, what's race and element?**

And here you have someone really pitiful.

She my wife, so she's my responsibility. Is that it?

**Rusian: I guess we'll have to add another year to your experience here too.**

**Ako: Eeehh!?**

Ako's repeat in LA was already decided ahead of time. It's another one year course.

**Rusian:** Rather, why don't you already know this? I was sure you'd already made elemental armors and racial equipment.

**Ako:** Err no, uhm, I really thought to myself that I had to learn it someday, you know? I really felt like learning about it once.

But you still proceeded without doing anything, I understand.

After all, even I'm someone who also waits things out often until it turns into something awful. I'll do it tomorrow. Tomorrow, I said.

**Apricot:** If you upgraded your equipment to the maximum limit, those things usually don't have much of an effect though. No matter where you go, you can already reasonably perform well.

**Rusian:** Equipment upgrades have a safe limit though. If upgrade past that point and fail, your equipment will break and then it's lost forever.

**Apricot:** Rusian, may I present to you, the cash item that doesn't break your equipment even if you fail.

Even if you recommend it to me, I'm not going to buy it.

Else, there be no end to when I start buying other upgrade materials.

**Apricot:** In addition to that, you can also use another cash item to increase the rate of successfully upgrading your equipment. If you buy them as a set, it would look like it's somewhat cheaper but in actuality, it doesn't make much of a difference. That's because it's very expensive in the first place.

**Rusian:** I did not need all that info. Give me something that'll actually help me out instead.

**Apricot:** The tests are being safekept in a safe in the faculty room. The password to the safe is 3528894.

*TL Note: This is probably goroawase (japanese number wordplay), 3528894 could also read as san-ko-ni-ya-ya-ko-shi which I roughly understood as 'I find it hard if you consult me' as in (*

*私を参考にすればややこしい*

*). I might be wrong with the interpretation of the goroawase here but this*

*seems to fit the best here.*

**Ako: Is that true!?**

**Apricot: It's a lie.**

**Ako: Why did you lie! Why! Why would you betray my feelings like this—!**

**Rusian: To start with, don't provide Ako with unneeded info!**

If you heard about that and found and opened the safe, then what would you do? You'd be going past the whole repeating a year thing and get expelled instead!

**Schwein: I know I'm the one who brought it up, but is this really something you need to talk about ingame?**

Schew suddenly said that.

Ah, this is Segawa not Schwein. It's not like I'm trying to differentiate them, but you can just tell from the expression she uses who's who.

**Apricot: I'm fine with installing either Skype, Teamspeak, or Mumble and we can switch over to that.**

**Rusian: Ah, voice chat is an option too—**

We just talk to each other instead of chatting when in the clubroom after all. I guess just talking normally would be fine when we're at home too. It's easier, plus it feels like I'm talking with a girl over the phone— No, that's no good. That way of thinking is no good. Net games and reality are different. Net games and reality are different.

As I was reflecting on my thoughts, Schew, as if completely disgusted, said,

**Schwein: Haa? You want me to face the PC while talking alone at home? The people around me would think I'm sick in the head. I refuse.**

Haaaa!?

What did you just say!? What kind of cruel thing did you just say, you bastard!

**Rusian: You, apologize to me right now! In behalf of everyone else in the world, apologize to me!**

**Ako: Russian, have you used voice chat before?**

I have. I have. Is there something wrong with that?

I was having fun with everyone else. True, I was in my room talking by myself, but isn't that the same as a phone call? In the first place, I wasn't alone. I wasn't talking to myself and I wasn't playing alone either.

**Rusian: I wasn't alone...**

**Ako: I don't understand. I don't understand but, those words feel really sad!**

**Rusian: I'm not sad! I'm not sad at all!**

While Rusian— my character ingame, was sobbing and crying, Master just shrugged her shoulders, Schwein was smirking and laughing, while Ako was petting me, saying 'there, there' all while sending out a heart mark flying.

**Apricot: Many people would go to use net games as a superior chat tool that can capture those kind of motions. Even just talking by itself is no problem.**

**Rusian: But it's been awhile since this game released too, so there's not a lot of newbies anymore. Because of that, the player population keeps decreasing.**

**Ako: The number of people are decreasing?**

**Rusian: The way you don't even think that's happening just shows how great of a game it is.**

When Ako started playing, the game had already been released for a few years. If you didn't notice a decrease in players a year after that, it's probably because all the players left are regulars. The game manages to somehow survive by the pattern of collaborations and advertisements, coupled with cunning ways of charging people to bleed them dry. This may sound bad but it's actually a good thing. After all, there's nothing sadder than hearing about the game's end of service.

**Rusian: Some net games are really unfortunate after all. There were talks of something like 'We just had our scheduled maintenance but all our data disappeared so we have to end our service' happening after all.**

**Schwein: Hey, isn't that game a bit too half-assed? lol**

*TL note: Shoutout to the recent BDO RU news for actually making me believe this kind of idiocy is possible (even though it didn't actually happen, they still implied it could). Even Schwein thinks that that is half-assed lol.*

**Rusian:** There was also an even unluckier one where when you went to install the game, your OS would break.

**Apricot:** They just broke through a wall that they really shouldn't have...

They've already broken past the heavens even, so it can't be helped. The fact that they couldn't continue their service anymore couldn't be helped.

**Ako:** Haa... I wonder if school would go under a temporary maintenance tomorrow.

**Rusian:** Don't hope for something that has just no way of happening.

**Ako:** Uu, going to visit Rusian is my sole happiness.

Don't come. Ah, no. It's not like I'm telling you never to come over but at least try to get to know the people in your class.

**Ako:** Ah, I'll make lunch and come visit. Do you have any requests? If it's something we have in our fridge, I'll make it.

**Rusian:** I'd rather you direct that energy to your studies and making friends in class.

**Ako:** I understand. I'll put on lots of garlic so you'll have lots of stamina.

**Rusian:** Are you trying to drive away my friends by making me reek of garlic?

What a white-collar crime! If such delicious food was placed in front of me, I wouldn't be able to help myself from eating it, won't I!

**Schwein:** Do what you want—, my bad self is going to sleep.

**Apricot:** I suppose I'll farm solo or something.

**Rusian:** Are you guys just going to abandon me! I thought we were comrades!

My guild members are cold-hearted.

But well, this is probably some collaboration set up by them for me.

Like the whole thing about talking about real life ingame was just to confuse Ako so she can get used to real life.

“...I feel like I don’t really have to think that much about this.”

Well, even if I don't, it's fun so I don't really mind.

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## Part 3

“Morning—”

As I put down my bag and greeted the guys close to me, they happily smiled at me as they said.

“Yo Nishimura, your wife’s not here yet.”

“Good morning, Nishimura Russian?”

“Please stop it, I’ll die.”

My heart is going to stop.

“That’s exactly what we’re telling you to do, get a hint already.”

“I won’t tell you to die, but at least, I hope you have a bad day.”

“Aren’t you guys being too honest?”

This is pretty cruel treatment. Also, the stares from my classmates are scary.

Actually, my place in class has been a little complicated as of late. I’ve always been treated as this harmless open otaku in class, but since Ako has been coming to visit me everyday...

“Hey Nishimura, what’s it feel like having a girlfriend?”

“Is your girlfriend not coming today—? Ru—si—a—n—kun?”

“Ah—, I bet you probably make her call you ‘Onii-chan ≡’ when it’s just the two of you, damn you—”

“He probably makes her wear a maid outfit and makes her call him ‘Dear Master ☆’. That girl looks like she suited for it after all.”

I’ve been on the receiving end of their harsh treatment.

Seriously, I don’t make Ako call me ‘onii-chan’. She also doesn’t call me ‘dear master’. She does call me her husband and dear from time to time though.

And so, to escape that unreasonable— I really don’t have any relationship

with her with you know— that actually unreasonable— treatment of me, I'm presently working hard to that end.

In my mind, of course, I actually feel superior to them but not letting that show is one of the secrets to being successful in life.

"I'm telling you she's really not my girlfriend. She's just a friend."

"That. I really want to be able to say that 'she's really not my girlfriend' line just once."

"Ah— I feel you—! I want to try it out too—!"

Damn it, they're not listening.

"It's really different from what you guys think. She's just a friend who happens to share the same hobby. I don't really treat her different from other girls—"

"...Morning."

Just then, I heard a voice from the side that sounded like it was in a really bad mood.

Even though she struggled to get that little voice out, it was still plenty cute and was a voice that I was used to hearing.

As I looked towards the source of the sound, there stood Segawa who looked like she was intentionally carrying a disgusted look on her face. It was the person behind her bad warrior self, Schwein.

"Morning, Segawa."

That partner of mine who I spent all of last night chatting with answered me back with,

"...Tch!"

Did she just click her tongue!?

Eh, not just that but she's ignoring me too!?

"J, just now, did you just click your tongue while looking at me as if to say 'Why is this guy still alive?'"

“It feels like our original Nishimura has finally returned to us.”

“Oh yeah, it definitely feels like that.”

Just who do you actually think I am?

Do I suddenly stop being myself just because I found a little bit of happiness?

As I was feeling a bit depressed, a girl’s face suddenly appeared in front of me.

“Sorry, Nishimura-kun. Akane was actually in a pretty good mood earlier but...”

“It’s fine, it’s fine. This always happens.”

The female classmate that came with Segawa remarkably followed up after her.

Let’s see, she was with Segawa before too... That.. Err... A-san. I haven’t really remembered her name yet, but she’s definitely a good person.

But this is bad. I should have at least tried to learn her name.

“That aside, don’t you and Akane actually get along well?”

“.....What were you looking at that made you think that?”

I was so nervous that I stuttered a bit.

Eh, what? Does it look that way?

“It’s because I often see you secretly talking in a corner of the hallway. Just yesterday it looked like the both of you were having fun talking near the school store.”

We were seen!

Before we knew it, we were already being watched!

“OH, • THAT • WAS • JUST • NOTHING”

“Nishimura-kun, you’re really meek aren’t you.”

A-san giggled as she laughed. Her laughing face is indeed cute, but to me, it just seems scary.

Ah, this person is really a normie—, or something like that, and also has this

gal-like aura that I'm just not accustomed to. This in itself tells me that our playstyles just don't match, or at least, that's what I feel.

"Hey, do you have something going on with Akane? Even though you look like you already have a girlfriend, don't tell me you're cheating?"

"To start, if Segawa heard what you just said, she'll be so disgusted she might blow her top. That much is true."

"Hmm, hmm?"

What's with that smile looks like you've figured everything out?

Please stop it. I just can't calm down while those eyes, that look like they're brimming with so much life experience that I can't believe we're the same age, are staring at me.

"Nanako, what are you doing? There's no need for you to pay attention to someone like Nishimura."

"Ah ok, ok. Nishimura-kun, if there is any sort of trouble regarding Akane make sure you help me out ok?"

"Sure, sure, if it's something I can do."

I have identified her first name. Though even if I knew that, it would've been of no use.

That's not it, even I think it's bad to not remember the names of the girls in class. Because you see, when the teacher would ask me something like 'Nishimura, please return these printouts to everyone in the class—' and it's time to actually return them, I would be extremely troubled. I can't match their faces and names after all.

There was that mess before where I thought 'Who the heck is Akiyama-san? I don't know her!', and just went to ask a girl beside me 'Hey, hey, where's Akiyama-san's seat?' then proceeded to leave the printout on said desk after she pointed it out. I really should have just figured out who she was instead.

As I was worrying over here, one of the guys cast a glance toward Segawa's group.

"Yep, if you think about our class, she's pretty good too isn't she? That

Akiyama-san.”

So that girl was that Akiyama-san! I’m sorry for not handing you your printout directly!

But...pretty good, huh. If I was in front of a girl like that, I would be so ridiculously nervous that I would just tire myself out.

Actually, someone like Ako who I can just relax around with is more my type — No, this is not about that.

“Say, Akiyama-san talks to you from time to time, doesn’t she Nishimura?”

“And Akiyama-san just said it, but you’re actually getting along with Segawa pretty well aren’t you?”

“Oh? Three-timing? Is it three-timing? Ah damn you.”

“Ah— I have to tell your wife. Your husband is three-timing.”

The guys grinned as they laughed and said this. You all, treating other people as joke...

Of course, I knew they didn’t really mean all that. The image of Segawa seriously clicking her tongue at me was still fresh in their memories after all. But the truth is, I’m really annoyed.

“Listen here all of you, do you really think I—”

As I began to say that, everybody’s expression suddenly froze.

And from my back, something that feels like it emanated from the depths of hell— saying it like that is taking it a bit lightly, but, a voice that was clearly coated in cold murderous intent could be heard.

“Rusian.....Were you.....cheating on me.....?”

“O, oh Ako, good morning.”

As I slowly turned my head around, Ako softly spoke as she smiled.

“Ah but this is a bother. I have not prepared ‘that’ today.”

“Just what did you mean by ‘that’?”

“You use it like this. And swing it like this. It’s ‘that’.”

As Ako began swinging around some imaginary thing, she took ‘that’ and stabbed an unseen target, forcefully twisting ‘that’ and pulling ‘that’ out afterwards. She seemed awfully used to performing the scene she just acted out.

“Are you actually going to stab me after all?”

“Ah no. If I’m going to stab anyone, it’s that Akiyama-san.”

“That’s no good as well!”

That’s even worse! Don’t go around causing trouble for strangers!

“That story before was just a joke. I’m not that blessed with female relationships, right you guys?”

As I turned the flow of the conversation to my friends, they were all silent as they begin to nod one by one.

“Is that so. I’m glad... That this got settled without me having to unwillingly dirty my hands.”

Please stop it, you’re scaring me.

As if realizing the frightened gazes cast on her, Ako began to show a troubled smile as she shook her head.

“It was just a joke. More than having it end without stabbing anyone, I’m much happier that Rusian wasn’t actually cheating on me.”

That’s wasn’t the way I was hoping you would clear that up.

Also, it goes without saying, but Ako was included in that part where I said I’m just not blessed with female relationships.

Even if I include you, that doesn’t mean I’m blessed you know.

“Ah, hey, Ako-san?”

“.....Eh?”

Just then, one of the guys I was talking to suddenly called out to Ako.

I mean, calling her out is fine but why did you use her first name? As if you’re someone that important.

Ah—, just what is this. I feel really irritated. I really feel frustrated..

“Ah, err, what...”

Ako was clearly disgusted as he smiled at her, not saying anything.

“Ah no, I don’t know your last name after all. Was it bad for me to use your first name?”

“No, err, if possible...”

To the guy going ‘Hahaha’, forcing out a laugh, Ako looked up as she said in small but audible voice.

“If possible, please don’t talk to me.”

“Ggh!?”

Ah, he died.

“Takasaki!”





“Takasaki just received a traumatic attack! Call for the combat medic!”

“Takasaki, hang in there! Takasaki!”

Looking as if he had fainted, the collapsed Takasaki— The one who called out to Ako— was being provided with relief by the surrounding males.

But that One Hit Kill Decisive Strike took no prisoners. Rather than just receiving a traumatic attack, you would just die instantly.

If I was on the receiving end of such words, it would have sent a chill down my spine. I’m already shivering just imagining it but, I feel a little—, just a tiny little bit relieved.

“H, hey Ako. I can understand you getting upset being suddenly called by your first name, but you could have at least phrased that sentence, that rejection better.”

“Eh, but, Russian...”

Ako’s hands reached for my cheeks. I can feel the warmth of her hands through my skin.

She began to rub the area below my cheekbones, as if to confirm something. Just then Ako, with a bashful look on her face, smiled.

“Russian, you look a bit delighted though?”

“That madam is simply not what’s going on here.”

“Why are you being so formal?”

“There is simply no reason for that.”

“Whyyyy—”

I told you it’s nothing, so it’s nothing!

“.....Gross.”

A bit far from where we were talking was Segawa who gave us a disgusted look.

And, Akiyama-san, who was beside her, seemed to really enjoy this as she

looked at us and Segawa.

It may have probably been just a hallucination, but it felt like she just aimed her targeting cursor and clicked on me.

E, err, that was just my imagination right?

“Aight, let’s do our best with the club activities today, right Segawa?”

“Shut up. Your breath stinks of garlic so don’t come over here.”

What did you just say!

As a guy, being told you stink hurts more than I thought!

“If you have a complaint then say it to Ako. That girl seriously went ahead and made it.”

The contents of the lunch that I gratefully received was actually riddled with garlic. It wasn’t only in the side dish but in the main dish as well. What was up with that food you call garlic rice? Its fragrant aroma smelled like pepper and was really delicious you know?

“Even though I am like this, my future dream is still to be a housewife!”

Ako, who herself refused to eat the garlic meal, puffed out her chest in pride as she said that.

“You’re really making an effort towards that end aren’t you.”

“I’m the type that is able to work hard if it would make my life easier, so my cooking skill is pretty high!”

“Just what is with that effort? It seems to be lacking a sense of direction...”

That’s wrong Segawa, it has one.

To net game players, that’s pretty common.

From the bottom of my heart, I completely agree with that sentiment.

“To increase efficiency in leveling you would need to have certain equipment. And to obtain said equipment, you would need to farm. And to be able to farm, you would need to have skills or it would be inefficient. And to be able to use those skills, you need to promote your class. And to do that, you would need to

create an alt character. Something like that is actually a thing.”

*TL Note: In Ragnarok Online (what LA is supposedly based off of), promoting your class (job change) sometimes requires items which could be acquired easier by having another class get it (most prominent from memory for beginners would be hunting for trunks as a novice to become an archer or just buying them with a merchant). It is not exactly easier because of the requirement of an alt, but the method itself is the easier part (passively sitting down and buying them as opposed to actively farming for them).*

“If you have time to do all that, just go ahead and actually farm.”

“So you say, but to actually start farming, making a character first is what a net game player does.”

“That’s an endless cycle of greed...”

There is not a single net game player who does not experience this endless cycle. That’s one of my theories that I’m pretty interested in.

“Now then, everyone, I have a report.”

Master said that as she got our attention by slapping her hands together with a clap.

“I’ve received information from Ms Saitou regarding the meeting they had yesterday. It seems that we, the Modern Electronic Communications Game Club, was on their agenda.”

“So it’s about that huh.”

“Well, it’s sure to be on top of the list of the unresolved matters in the school right.”

Now that you say it, you may be right. Having the student council president, who was supposed to be an honor student, suddenly start something like a net game club in a peaceful school such as this would definitely not be overlooked.

“But, Ms Saitou was reliably on our side. It seems she had a proper counterargument to what they had to say. It went— Due to the establishment of the Modern Electronic Communications Game Club, a female first year student, who had a record of irregular attendance, is now regularly and

properly coming to school. It has shown remarkable results in the most difficult part of a teacher's duty— that is all."

"O, oh..."

A female first year student who has a record of irregular attendance.

That was Ako. That was completely Ako.

"So it was Ako..."

"It was definitely Ako..."

Segawa was mixed with a feeling of melancholy.

She was completely treated as a problem child.

She was a problem child belonging to the same club as the student council president who just caused a huge problem. Since we also belong to that same club, are we still considered okay? I'm pretty worried about that.

"It seems Ako's class adviser even said that the student in question has been coming to school properly and has been trying to adapt to the class in her own way. The credit for all this is undoubtedly due to Ako."

"This is all thanks to me isn't it!"

"Why do you look like you're a bit proud of that?"

Why do you have that shit-eating grin that says 'Why, I was useful to everyone wasn't I'?

"By the way, there was also another very huge factor that affected all of this."

Master said that, as if the matter about Ako was just an introduction.

"From the student-in-question's mother, they received a phone call that said, 'This is the first time I've seen my daughter happily go to school ever since she enrolled here. I am very grateful.' When she said that, none of the teachers could publicly express their complaints anymore."

"Mom, why did you go and do something unnecessary?"

Ako's shit-eating grin was suddenly warped by despair.

Even if you don't look that disappointed, your mother would still be happy

you know?

“Isn’t she a nice mother? She’s just worrying about her daughter.”

“That’s not the case at all—!”

“...Eh, do you not get along?”

Ako seemed to be serious when she said that.

Even though I thought that I might’ve asked something that I shouldn’t have, Ako unsteadily shook her head at my question.

“No, no, we actually get along pretty well. I didn’t mean it like that. It’s more like she doesn’t care about it that much that she would go out of her way to call the school just to say her thanks.”

Ako reassured herself saying that, as she looked like she was fumbling about in her memories.

“‘If you want to go to school, then go. But if you don’t want to, then not going is fine too, no?’, was my mother’s original stance on this. There was also something like, ‘If you still can’t get used to it, then transferring to a more adequate school is fine too’. But I didn’t feel like studying for the transfer admission exams so I just refused.”

What an irresponsible mother. Does a parent like that even exist?

“Did she really say all of that...?”

“I mean, she is my mom after all.”

“That statement has a pretty amazing convincing power.”

It felt like I was convinced just by saying that she was Ako’s mother. I could realistically imagine Ako’s mother giving her adolescent Ako a passionate speech on how it was fine not to attend something like school.

“So based on that, I presume something happened that made her want to call up the school right—. Really, doing something so unnecessary.”

“But if you just look at the results, didn’t she actually help you out?”

“That’s just how it came to be!”

Ako forcefully replied to Segawa, who was curiously asking that.

“Even assuming that it wouldn’t cause any problem, delivering an instant kill attack by having the teachers give me a tepid look while being told ‘We just received a phone call from your mom about how grateful she is.’ just like that, my mom is probably laughing her heart out just thinking about it!”

“There’s no way she planned for that, definitely.”

“But she’s my mom you know!”

“I feel like I’m going to just accept it if this keeps up so stop saying that.”

‘It really feels like she’s going to convince me...’ is what Segawa murmured. You too huh? You think so too?

“Well, it was acknowledged in the faculty room that the goal of this was to rectify Ako’s current disposition. So now, we can puff out our chests in pride and continue on with our club activities.”

“Ako-chan FTW! It’s okay to praise me you know?”

Do you even call that a win? Isn’t your standards for winning pretty strange? The world in general would brand you a loser in this case. Without a doubt.

“But Ako, you’ve tried to at least blend into your own class right?”

Segawa just said something like that. Come to think of it, I heard her say it earlier. That’s she’s trying her best.

“That’s, well... I think the difficulty of the quest is too advanced. In the first place, my level is not high enough to take that quest. Or maybe I still haven’t learned the required skill for it, or maybe I’m lacking some necessary event item...”

“In other words, our activities have had no effect at all.”

Segawa said that as she slightly empathized with Ako.

“I’m sure my life is just bugged. This is definitely an anomaly.”

“Ako, I’m sad to say this but when you find something in net games that make you think ‘This is a bug isn’t it?’, 90% of the time it is actually intended.”

“Patch fix, please come soon.”

Ako despondently said.

“Honestly, as long as we have the game it’s fine, is what I think.”

“I can’t deny that.”

“Deny it! If you don’t, then you’ll be no good as well.”

I understand what you mean, but this is just our same honest opinion.

For the greater half of my life, I’ve been living to play games.

“If we didn’t have club activities you probably wouldn’t even bother coming right, to something like school.”

“If you can say that you can still keep at it despite that, that would be nice.”

“Right. So do your best ok?”

“Ookaay.”

You have a place to be with your friends. You a have place where you belong.

Even if all you have is just those things, you could surprisingly muster the will to do your best.

“Alright, let’s get started with our club activities. My ingame funds have fallen below my expected values, so I won’t be able to meet my quota at this rate!”

Segawa strongly said that as she started up LA. It was through the usual login screen that someone I’m familiar with, Schwein’s soul, resided. It was directly after logging that character in...

A knocking sound could be heard coming from the door.

“.....Eh?”

It was at that exact same moment that Segawa stopped moving.

Directly facing her seat was Ako, who was also fixed in her posture.

“Just now, did someone, just knock?”

“Someone did knock, right?”

With their frightened expressions clearly showing, Ako and Segawa exchanged glances.

When you think of people who would come here but are not in the club, there's only Saitou-sensei (= Nekohime-san). But a club's adviser wouldn't go out of their way to knock on their own clubroom door. After all, there's nothing that we do that would get us in trouble for if we were seen by her. Which means that, the person that just arrived was an outsider.

"I see, so unusual events like this also happen."

"It being unusual is not the problem here. What should we do? Pretend we're out? Is it ok if we pretend we're not here?"

"Pretending you're not in the clubroom sounds weird. It's weird but, I can't allow myself to be seen here..... I guess our only option is to pretend?"

"Calm down, calm down."

We can't pretend we're not here after all.

If it was another teacher what are we going to do? I don't think they would especially allow us to let this incident be overlooked.

"Yes? Please come in."

"Wai, don't tell them to c..."

In response to my words, the door opened with a creak.

"Ah, I knew it was Akane~"

"Na, Nanako?"

It was a classmate, and someone Segawa frequently talks with. It's, err, uhm

—

"A, Akiyama-san!"

"Yaho, Nishimura-kun. ...Why do you look like you just got a right answer in a quiz show?"

"THAT • IS • NOT • IT • AT • ALL"

"Ah right, more importantly than that."

Seeing the unthinkable happen before her eyes, Segawa's expression stiffened and turned around to face Akiyama-san in the manner of a rusted

robot.

“W, what are you doing Nanako? What did you come to a place like this for?”

“What else could it be but to look for Akane~”

“M, me?”

The sound of a slightly stuttering sound could be heard.

As her hands trembled with awkward movements, Segawa pointed to herself.

“Yup. You were restlessly looking around before entering the room so I was kind of wondering what you were up to—”

“J, just when did you...”

“Rather, I knew that you were doing something with Nishimura-kun! What’s this, what’s this? A computer?”

“—ugh!”

As Akiyama-san began to the room without hesitation, Ako’s eyes opened wide as she froze up.

And then, Master skillfully said.

“It’s given that we use computers here, but that’s not our main thing. This is the Modern Electronic Communications Game Club’s clubroom— in short, the Net Game Club!”

“Why did say that? Why did you say that? Why did you say thaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaat!”

Segawa stood up with such a fierce vigor and grabbed Master’s neck and proceeded to shake her back and forth.

While she was being shaken fast enough that it left afterimages, Master cheerfully laughed.

“Ha! Ha! Ha! So it was your fear of others finding out that you played net games of all things. But Schwein, I wouldn’t mind if you proudly named yourself as one of the members of the Net Game Club, you know.”

“I already told you that I’ll pass on thaaaaaaaaaat!”

What should I do about this situation? It’s just full chaos or something. In the meantime, Segawa’s mental HP bar just hit the red zone.

“So, what do you do here Nishimura-kun? Akane, the president, Tamaki-san... Does everyone here play games together?”

“Well, that’s the gist of it.”

“Hmm...”

She then took a peek at the monitor Segawa was using. Seeing the image of the character Schwein being displayed, Akiyama-san began to nod as if she understood something.

Well, she wasn’t mistaken about the contents of our club activities. In essence, this was that sort of activity.

“Wait! Just what are you saying Rusian!”

“So Akane calls him Rusian too? Is that something like a nickname in the club?”

“Noooooooooooo!”

“Fbooooh!?”

Ouuuuuch!?

You, wait, you’re going to go that far!?

That damn Segawa. Going so far as to kick me in front Akiyama-san.

“You’re wrong, you’re wrong, you’re wrooooong! That’s not it! I’m not in the club!”

Segawa, who just released her grip of Master, went to cling on to Akiyama-san. A stiff smile then showed on her face as she said.

“You see, I’m not involved in this. But I was told by Nekohime-sensei to look after them, so I couldn’t help but stay here.”

“Nekohime-sensei?”

“Ah that was wrong, that’s her character name. You see, uh, it was Saitou-

sensei!”

“...Character?”

“I’m telling you you’re wrong, really! In other words, you see... So that normal people like you would not come and get tainted in a twisted place like this, I’m standing guard! So hurry up and get out! Hurry up, and, please, get, out! I told you to get out of heeeeeeeere!”

Just where did all that strength come from that small body? Segawa, whose body type was completely different from that of Akiyama-san’s large build, forcibly dragged the latter to the exit.

“Eh, wa, Akane, wai—”

“Well then, see you tomorrow! Take care on the way home!”

Bang! And the door closed with a tremendous noise.

Segawa forcibly shut the lock on the door and then sank down to the floor.

“It’s over... My high school life... is over...”

“Well, for now, good job today.”

“Don’t tell me that when you were the one that let her in...”

Segawa jeered at me without any enthusiasm. I guess she’s really depressed, that Segawa.

She looked like she turned into a pile of white ash as she exhaustedly plopped. If you sit like that I’m going to see your panties, was something that I couldn’t say. As a show of my warrior’s compassion, I’ll just take a little peek. Ah, white.

*TL note: A show of warrior’s compassion could be used in the context of mercy by finishing an enemy. You could say in this event that having her panties be seen would be the finishing blow.*

“...So then, what about you Ako? What’s the matter?”

“No, it’s just...”

As I went to check up on Ako, who remained frozen up until Akiyama-san left, she replied.

“Having some stranger suddenly show up in your own personal place... Is pretty scary isn't it?”

“Ah, I get you.”

It's like when you boldly declare, ‘This is my domain!’, and then someone just passes right through it, of course you'd freeze up. This is especially the case when your opponent is something like a normie. When that happens, it feels like the person that just passed through was the main character and you were just an extra.

“What's more, dealing with that galgal-like person... is impossible. It's really just impossible. That was a special Anti-Ako Weapon.”

“So someone with your weakness has finally attacked...”

But just what was with that galgal-like adjective? I do understand what you mean though.

“Uuuu, Rusian, please comfort me.”

“Ah— there, there.”

I just proceeded to somewhat pet Ako who snuggled up to me.

Segawa, who just used up all of her strength, still managed to give us a gaze that was saying ‘These two are annoying.’ and that kind of hurt.

“But Schwein, do you really hate talking about net games with your friends that much? It's just a hobby after all. It's not that big of a deal, right?”

“That's true. Even the number of girls who are interested in subculture seem to be somewhat numerous.”

“That's what it may look like to you guys but to me it's different.”

Segawa hit the floor with a bang. She then scowled at us.

“‘I just sort of have a hobby that's considered a subculture’, if it was just that sort of thing I would talk about it too. How do I put it? ‘Ever since I was a kid, I've loved games. There were a lot of times when all I'd do is play games all day. I even like games that are a bit too niche. If I have to say, my favorite games have to be the fantasy ones.’, is just how it is so talking about it is out of the

question!”

I feel like I’ve already heard this somewhere before.

And then Segawa cried out ‘But that’s not it!’.

“Just saying that you play net games by itself has severe implications. Just this one factor could determine your very being. Saying you play net games is tantamount to saying you’re also into manga, anime, voice actors from the game, or even the deep web! And if you’re a female, this leads to you also automatically attaching yourself with the fujoshi element! It’s that deep of a hobby!”

“Is, is that so?”

“Don’t take the girls of this modern age lightly. They’ll one sidedly put labels on you that afterwards, could negatively affect your school life. To what extent however, is something I don’t even want to think about...”

Having the open otaku label attached to me camouflages me in a good way. But I guess having the net game otaku label attached to a female student would have a hard effect on her school life.

“But in reality, aren’t you actually into manga, anime, game voice actors, and internet topics?”

“That’s true but doesn’t that just make this even worse!?”

I, I am very sorry.

This was an even pressing matter than I thought. The world of females is something to feared.

“But well, that’s over now. Come, let’s proceed with our club activities.”

“There’s no way I’d be in the mood for that right now... Aah, my school life...”

“Uhm, in place of a purification ritual, is it okay to just scatter around salt?”

*TL note: In Shinto, salt is used to purify things.*

“Ako, that person was my classmate you know? And even though she might look like that, she’s not that bad of a person you know?”

This is just chaotic.

In the end, our club activities ended just like that, with us having barely played at all.

Segawa kept fiddling with her phone in her frightened state. Thankfully, it seems no messages making fun of her and her hobby arrived.

“That was the last boss.”

On the way home, Ako said that.

“Yeah, a big one has suddenly appeared.”

The issue of cheering up Segawa was important as well, but stopping Ako from seriously scattering salt in the clubroom was already a huge effort. It looks like I won't be able to come to hate those types of brilliantly shining girls who seems like they'd go 'Normie heading out ☆'. They're kind of like Ako after all.

“But calling her last boss means you'll have to go and defeat her someday right? I applaud your bravery, but I think Akiyama-san is probably a pretty powerful foe you know?”

“I understand. That brilliant aura, that atmosphere that seems to have fear no matter where she is, are all things high above my reach.”

But, after that Ako proudly said.

“This is the same issue as the uneven distribution of wealth. In our current society, the uneven distribution of normie levels is occurring. We can't let those normietalists have their way with this kind of tyranny forever. There's no choice but for us to revolt against the normiely wealthy. Let's see, let's call it the 'Un-Real Revolution'.”

Wait, that sounds really good so stop it. It's going to leave a mark in my head.

“So then, are the anti-normies going to bring down the normies during that revolution?”

“Yep. It's about time we let those people get a taste of our grief.”

“...I'm sure the lower classes of that society would be the ones having fun then.”

“...Since we're the ones who lord over them, they'll have no choice but to feel

sorry for us right.”

Your ‘system’ specifications are really precise huh? Yeah.

“You know, Master already said this, but are you trying hard to make friends in class?”

There was what that report that came from her adviser said after all.

Ako is trying her best in her own way. I can’t be any happier than that.

“You ask if I’m trying hard... For now, I’m still trying out replying to people.”

“You’re still at that stage huh...”

“I can properly talk with people in our guild though...”

You’ve been hanging out with us for a pretty long time now, after all.

But it seems like she’s actually working hard so I’m a bit relieved. To be honest, I was worried.

“Ako do you recall Takasaki... that guy that tried to talk to you this morning? It’s about the One Hit Kill Decisive Strike you pulled off on him. I thought that you treated your classmates all the same in the ‘It’s disgusting so please don’t call me by my name’ manner of rejecting them.”

“No way, I wouldn’t do such a thing, you know.”

Ako shook her head.

“If I had that kind of courage, I think I would be living my life more enjoyably.”

You have a point there.

“Then what was the matter with him before? You don’t mind us when we call you by your name, but if it’s someone else calling you Ako, you don’t like it?”

“I’m fine with Rusian and the others in the club calling me by name. It’s just that when others do it, it doesn’t feel pleasant.”

Ako seemed to be really pondering about this as she tilted her head.

“Err, uhm. It’s true that my name is Ako but I don’t really care if you call me that, was what I tried to say. It’s the same feeling as when they sell a downloadable version of a game and they go ‘I don’t really care if you tell me

your country or not.', that sort of thing."

"Yo, stop saying that about your country."

You're going to hurt a lot of Japanese people with those words. They're bothered by it after all. When they go to select a language all the other languages are available but for some reason, when they try to select Japanese, it turns out they still need to pay for it.

But that's true. Even if it was me, having some strange guy call me by my first name would also give off a strange feeling.

To begin with, my experiences of being called by my first name is practically nil.

"Up until now, I've never been intimate with any other guy other than Russian, so I think that no matter who it is that calls me that, it would still give me an uncomfortable feeling. I guess I really have to apologize to that person right?"

Just me huh.

It is an honor, or, how do I say it...

"I guess it's still not late to address how I call you and use Tamaki-san instead."

"Is it okay if I cry?"

"You don't need to cry! I said you don't need to cry!"

Before I even gave my permission, she already looked teary-eyed!

This affectionate manner of conveying 'It's no use arguing about it' is really fearsome.

"By the way, I was really curious about what happened with Schew's otaku secret being exposed. What about you Ako?"

"I wouldn't talk about that, whether it got exposed or not."

"...I see."

So the only one troubled by this is Segawa.

Let's see, I wonder if she's okay?





# 初心者育成伝

And you thought there is Never a girl online?



# Chapter 2: How to Raise a Beginner

*TL Note: Title is a most probably a reference to some kind of raising simulation game (e.g. Princess Maker, idol games, Monster Rancher, etc.) but I'm not sure which this is so I just made the title as is. If anyone knows the actual reference for this, please do let me know so I can correct it.*

## Part 1

Translation: Yamaking

Directly after that.

**Schwein: Let's do this, all of you! My bad self only has this world left so let's go take over this world!**

Schwein, who was swinging her sword around stronger than usual, was really fired up. She has already forsaken the real world for the world of LA and was placing all of her hopes on it.

I told you it would be fine. That gossip wouldn't spread. Akiyama-san is probably not that kind of person. I don't really know her though so I'm not sure about that.

**Apricot: I, myself, am glad that Schwein is all fired up.**

**Rusian: Well if you're that pumped up, then I might as well go with you.**

But even if you say that, she's still the same old net gamer Schew. If everyone was serious about going all out, then me and Master tagging along wouldn't be the problem.

**Ako: We're both comrades that only have this world left but don't you think it's fine to not take it over— Eh?**

Ako suddenly changed to direction of her glance to outside of the cafe. Right there was the sight of a player who seemed to aimlessly wandering about.

Hoo, this is pretty rare.

Our guild, Alley Cats, may have decided to monopolize usage of this cafe in town for our own ends, but few people actually make use of this convenient cafe we're staying at. The healing you receive from it is pretty doubtful, you can't even use it for quests, and the only thing they sell is a mysterious drink. This is also located far from the main road where most shops and players are located. It's the kind of place that even a few people wouldn't bother to go visit.

It was in this kind of place that a player mysteriously dropped by. But somehow, I don't recognize their appearance.

They had a cute face with no particularly defining features, quite similar to the default one. Their hairstyle was a plain black ponytail and their attire was made from cloth with brown colored trousers. In addition, they also have a single knife, attached to their hip, which has a normal shape.

**Ako: That's a newbie isn't it?**

**Apricot: Starter gear huh? That brings back memories.**

That's right, to put it short, that was starter gear. Their hairstyle and appearance doesn't look like they're premium. 'If you just made a character for no reason at all, it would probably look like this', was what she looked like that experienced players would probably sense a feeling of deja vu upon seeing it. That player kept moving aimlessly and then suddenly stopping. The way they move and stop was really like a beginner's.

**Ako: This is kind of like me when I first started out.**

**Rusian: You definitely gave off that feeling when I first met you Ako—. The way that you were waddling around aimlessly like that.**

**Schwein: Oh yeah, the first time my bad self started farming with you guys already came together as a two-piece set. How'd you two meet?**

As Schew inquired about that, Ako gazed far into the distance and clasped both of her hands together as if saying a prayer.

**Ako: That was a day I could recall like it were yesterday. It was our fated meeting. I was getting attacked by a monster and then Rusian, just like a prince—**

**Rusian: Hey, don't go off embellishing that memory on your own.**

Don't go around spreading those lies. As if it was even that good of a story. It was not even the least bit interesting. You looked like you were aimlessly wandering around town that's why I called out to you. I can remember it even now. That unreliable sight of, 'dangerous, if left alone', Ako-style beginner.

'Hey, you okay?', was what I said to her before she suddenly stopped moving. When I finally thought she could type, the first thing she typed out was 'How do you end this game?'. Now that I remember it, it was a pretty terrible story.

**Rusian: When I taught her how to logout, without even saying a word of thanks, she just disappeared. Then the next day, there was something flickering in and out on the edge of my screen, and thought that maybe something was about to appear and then I found out that was it was Ako.**

**Apricot: So in other words, a stalker.**

**Ako: Basically, it's love.**

**Rusian: Don't acknowledge your stalker tendencies by chalking it up to love!**

You didn't know what you should do, so the first thing on your mind was to find me, who just happened to help you out once. But you didn't bother to call out even once, and just followed me around.

**Ako: Uuu, the husband is doubtful of his wife's love for him.**

**Rusian: If I could choose, I would rather have at least a little room for doubt. Your love is so heavy, it's suffocating.**

**Apricot: You two are just that good of a pair. Ako, and you too Rusian.**

Master strangely seemed happy as she said that. Is that how it is? Though, as I was thinking that, the beginner-like player approached us and suddenly came to a stop. As I happened to hover my cursor over the character, the name that was displayed next to it was 'Sette'. I don't remember that name. I guess it's not someone I know.

But I'm a bit curious now that they're this close. While she was us shooting glances as if to check up on us, a message appeared above Sette-san. It seems they typed out something. The contents of it was,

**Sette: russian**

**Rusian: Oh?**

Eh? Me? My name? Did you just call out my name?

But here I was just thinking that you were someone I didn't know.

**Apricot: What's this Rusian? An acquaintance of yours?**

**Rusian: No, I'm not sure... Err, are you someone's alt?**

I'm pretty sure this wasn't the case, but I thought I might as well ask.

Because if this was someone's alt, they wouldn't be using the starter gear and opt to change their weapon and armor at least. Doing that greatly affects the speed at which you level up in the beginning after all.

**Sette: ?**

Their reply was just a single question mark.

Ah, they're really just like a beginner. I have to say, this is pretty annoying.

But I can't just leave them alone. They may have come here looking for me knowing that I knew them from somewhere. Or even if that wasn't the case, I wouldn't want to abandon a player who just started and have them lose all hope for this game.

**Rusian: Ok, ok. Say it in a way I can understand. For starters, do you know me? Have we met somewhere?**

**Sette: When I am in trouble**

That girl, Sette, just stopped talking midway. And after a little more time passed...

**Sette: you'd go and help me out, is what you said.**

Oh, she can finally type out her punctuation marks properly now.

But was there anyone that I said those words to?

**Rusian: Mm, would I really go and say something like that?**

**Ako: You really look like you would, Rusian.**

**Apricot: You look like you would.**

**Schwein: And while pointlessly looking cool too. lol**

**Rusian: You really don't trust me do you... Or wait, maybe you do?**

Well whatever the case, that's what the people around me said so I kind of started to doubt myself.

I can't dismiss the possibility that maybe I've met her and talked with her a bit. But during that time, did I really go and say something unnecessary like that?

**Rusian: So, yeah, Sette-san? Did you just start playing this game?**

**Sette: Yep.**

So it was a real beginner... Of course it would be one.

What should I do about this? Since it has come to this, I might as well look after her. But doing that would mean I have to drop out on today's farming session.

A single tank, a single melee DPS, a single ranged DPS, and a single healer was our party composition, so if anyone drops out, the party would just cease to function properly.

As I took a quick glance in everyone's direction, Schew lightheartedly laughed and said.

**Schwein: Fine then. Just this once, my bad self will take especially good care of you, you hear?**

'How was that?' was the feeling that she seemed to give as she said that. You actually have the nerve to still pull off that character.

And then, Sette-san,

**Sette: Pff**

**Schwein: Huuuh?**

For some reason, typed out that strange message.

**Sette: Sorry, I'm still not used to the chat.**

**Apricot:** Don't mind it, everyone's like that at first too. When I first started out, I wasn't able to talk as I please as well. But before I knew it, I started memorizing where the WASD keys were. After that, I also memorized where the CTRL, SHIFT, and ALT keys were also located. When a year had already passed, I did not even need to look at the keyboard anymore. When you look at this, passing a certification exam for typing without having training prior is not something unheard of. Ah, just how useful are these net games for the future!

That was a rather extremely arbitrary way of putting it, but it would definitely ease you into the use of computers. After all, for the sake of playing the game, there are a ton of things you will have to memorize.

**Ako:** Uhm, I still look at the keyboard whenever I type though?

**Schwein:** You just lack practice lol. My bad self has already mastered touch typing ages ago!

**Sette:** Pffhaha

**Schwein:** Yo, what's the matter?

Did something happen? Sette-san typed out a weird message again.

She then started moving around unsteadily. And, in what seems like an attempt to cover up what had just happened, she said.

**Sette:** I just spat out my coffee on my keyboard.

**Rusian:** That's horrible. You alright?

**Sette:** I'm fine.

I'm serious. Make sure you properly dry it out.

Well at any rate, since she said she just started, we might as well properly mentor her.

If you've just started playing, then the first order of business has to be that.

**Rusian:** To start, let's go with leveling. Let's head on to the Metal Petite Map. And along the way, if you already know your combo, you can take on the Goblin King. Ako will be so focused on healing you whenever you receive

**damage, that she'll have a nosebleed.**

**Schwein: Hey! Listen here punk.**

**Rusian: What?**

Schew stopped me for some reason.

When you talk of Metal Petites, they're the ones that only have 5 HP and have an insanely high amount of defense, but the EXP you get from them is pretty good. That's the kind of monster a Metal Petite Dragon is. Even if you're just a beginner, if you can just manage to land five hits then you'll be able to defeat it. What's more, if you also use your targeted skill on it while hitting it, this would be a pretty fast way of leveling up. As for the Goblin King, its attack speed is really slow and doesn't use any offensive skills, so there's no danger of instantly dying if you have someone who can keep topping you up and you'll eventually defeat it this way. This is another staple monster to level at. If we're talking about leveling, these two are pretty much the standard so just what about it are you not satisfied with.

**Apricot: If you think about it normally, having someone who just started the game suddenly get power-leveled from the get go is no good, Rusian. Games are there to have fun. That's what they're made for.**

**Rusian: .....I guess you have a point there.**

Now that you mention it, that would probably rob her half of the enjoyment of the game.

This is no good, I was about to taint her with the toxicity that's so rampant in these net games.

**Ako: Uhm, I don't think I was treated that kindly though?**

**Rusian: Ako, you're exactly like that now because I taught you like that. But you know, even I was aiming for you learn the basics of this game as well.**

**Ako: So you're saying I'm something like a failed outcome!?**

I can't tell her that she got that correct.

I didn't want Ako to be emotionally attached to me, I just wanted a competent healer.

**Schwein:** Leaving those idiots aside, the foundation of this game is beating monsters with your own strength. That said, my bad self will lend you a weapon. This is the +9 Hero's Beginner Knife. Go ahead and kill those monsters on your own with a tap of this baby.

**Rusian:** Hey! Stop, stop, stop!

I stopped Schew who just blurted out something terrible.

**Schwein:** You have any complaints about my weapon punk?

**Rusian:** Of course I do. What's with that overpowered weapon?

If you let her use such an OP weapon, she's going to tear through the beginner monsters no joke, as if they were trash. And then she won't learn anything in terms of player skill.

**Schwein:** Then what do you want to do?

**Apricot:** Just letting her use a normal weapon, letting her progress through the quests normally, and letting her level normally would be the best, no?

Master said that as if she was fed up with all of this.

But yeah, that's right. As expected of Master, you really know what's best.

**Apricot:** If I just give her an EXP booster premium item, that should be enough help for her leveling.

**Rusian:** I knew Master's idea was going to be no good.

**Apricot:** Why do you say that!?

To be honest, I knew it was something like that. Suddenly making use of an EXP booster is something you'd probably do. And if you couple that with net cafe special event boosts, you could probably earn EXP three times faster.

While we were talking, Sette-san unsteadily approached us.

**Sette:** So, what should I do?

**Rusian:** Ah—, well let's see.

What should you do. For starters, I think what Master said about fighting enemies normally, doing quests normally would do? But then, the four of us

being there would be pointless, right?

**Ako: Ooh! Ooh!**

Ako said that as she raised her hand.

**Ako: Since we have the chance, why don't we have a bit more fun playing the game! I think we should take her to places like where I proposed to Rusian!**

**Rusian: Rejected.**

**Ako: But why not!?**

You only said that because wanted to go there right?

Generally, places that look like sightseeing spots have too much variance in monster types, plus, they're pretty far and you'll have to go through a lot of towns to get to them—

**Rusian: Wait a minute. Doesn't this actually seem like a good idea?**

**Apricot: Going around the towns as you go sightseeing huh? That seems reasonable enough.**

**Schwein: Come to think of it, not having towns registered as a warp point is pretty inconvenient. You end up like Ako saying 'Help! I can't teleport over there!' lol.**

What this—, this is strange—. Ako's suggestion is actually the one that sounds the most reasonable—?

**Rusian: To think that I would to lose to Ako's suggestion...**

**Apricot: This is unbelievable.**

**Schwein: Man, if a rare event like this can happen, how about using those odds to give the magnificent me a rare item instead.**

**Ako: Shouldn't you be rethinking from scratch on how you treat me instead!**

No, no. This is fine. There's nothing wrong about it.

**Sette: You guys get along huh?**

Sette-san said that as she looked over us.

**Rusian: We've been hanging out for a pretty long time after all—**

**Schwein: This bunch is definitely an inseparable bad company lol.**

**Rusian: Though the only thing going bad here is your brain.**

**Schwein: I think you mean your personality.**

**Rusian: Huuh?**

**Schwein: What? You want a piece of this bro?**

**Sette: You really do get along lol.**

Do you really think we do based on our conversation just now?

**Rusian: For now, let's settle on the sightseeing tour. Next up comes the route we'll take. Sette-san, please wait a bit, I'll come up it with soon. To begin with, the starting point would probably be to get on the Patrol Airship. And then from there we'll jump off...**

In LA, there are a lot of places you could call a sightseeing spot. A staple one would be the view from the airship which is pretty good. The shrine located deep in the seafloor is also not half bad. Como Como's resort-like beach is also nothing to scoff at. And finally, the mechanized capital of August that gives off the feeling of being an sci-fi attraction is pretty fascinating as well.

**Rusian: Alright, I've finished it. Sette-san, first, we'll board the airship and then about halfway from there, we'll jump off above the ocean. After diving underwater for about five minutes, we'll arrive at a shrine. After visiting that, we can go to the nearby resort-like beach and dive into that. From there, we'll ride the whirlings tides and get swallowed by the whale and get blown through its spout afterwards. Past that, we'll pass through a dungeon deep in a graveyard and go through the warp gate in Hell's town. Using that gate, we'll arrive in the mechanized city where we'll climb the highest cogwheel and from there dive—**

**Sette: Absolutely. No.**

But why not!? This is undoubtedly going to be fun!

It's not dangerous, it's not dangerous at all! It's fine, it's fine!

This night ended soon after Sette-san shot down our plan to play with her, by showing her around, just like that.

“I knew it would turn out okay! My luck is starting to look up!”

The following day in the clubroom, Segawa said this with such high tension that anyone would be surprised.

Also, it may have been just me, but those twintails of hers seemed to be bouncing as they flapped.

“W, what’s up? Did something good happen?”

“Well, Nanako you see, said, ‘I wouldn’t go out of my way just to tell everyone —’, and she really kept quiet about it. Ah, really, I’m glad it was her. My school life would continue on for a little bit longer!”

Is ‘a little bit’ okay? Doesn’t that mean it’s going to end soon?

“But since you weren’t exposed, doesn’t that mean that if you’re not careful, someone else could potentially expose you as well? Like today for example. Someone could see you in here again you know?”

“I scoured the surroundings three times before I entered so it’s fine. Nanako also seemed like she was in a hurry to get home.”

‘Hmm, hmm’, hummed Segawa as she started up her PC, all the while playing with her mouse with a great mood.

“It’s about time I make up for all those recent setbacks. Where’s Ako and Master?”

“Who knows? Maybe they’re on cleaning duty today.”

Segawa, who just asked that, furrowed her brow as she let out her voice.

“...Ako on cleaning duty... Just thinking about it kind of scares me.”

“Well of course, she’s pretty out of it after all. And if she keeps making mistakes, it would probably turn off everyone from approaching her too.”

Is she even properly able to communicate with her classmates? I’m getting a bit worried. She wouldn’t be leisurely making idle talk while cleaning, right?

After talking about that for a few minutes, the door slowly opened.

“Pardon me for being late, I had a private matter to attend to.”

“Sorry for being late—”

A bit later after Master, Ako also entered the room.

For some reason, as soon as she entered the room, the teary-eyed Ako was looking at me with her eyes wide open.

“You know Rusian, they should just leave the cleaning to the people specialized in it, don’t you think!?”

Ah, my bad premonition was spot on.

“In the first place, it’s the others’ fault. Suddenly calling out to me, who has declared myself a loner. They really have no manners. It’s unthinkable. I mean, I may have forgotten that I was on cleaning duty, but still!”

“Ah, so did you blow off your top?”

“It was the first time in my life that I went, ‘Eeeep’.”

Hearing her say that made me I think, ‘Isn’t that pretty cute?’.

“Don’t worry about it. In my case, something like an ‘Is it okay if I go before you?’ DOT skill was inflicted on me as their way of showing consideration.”

It feels like the effects of that continuous damage still remained. It hurts doesn’t it?

But in Master’s case, it could have honestly been an act of consideration, is what I thought.

“Now then, let’s forget about all of this and get to playing, shall we?”

“That’s right. I still have LA.”

In any case, these two are completely motivated. I should go and do my best with them as well.

As I logged in thinking that, in the same old cafe was the sight of a player who was already waiting there beforehand.

**Sette: Hello.**

“Eh.”

As I spoke out loud without thinking, the other three looked at me.

“She’s here again huh.”

“That aside, was she really someone you knew after all?”

“No, I honestly don’t remember her.”

Even if it was someone I knew, I feel the mentoring we did yesterday should have been plenty enough.

Anyway, just talking with our mouths isn’t going to do anything, so I went to type in chat.

**Rusian: Yo, hello.**

**Schwein: Yo.**

**Ako: Hello.**

**Apricot: Welcome to Guild Alley Cat’s tavern!**

**Rusian: It’s not a tavern. And it’s not ours either.**

“That’s enough of that. What should we do?”

“Should we just leave her here and go farm?”

“That’s a bit... you know.”

What Ako just said was pretty extreme but I can’t say that’s not what I’d like to do as well.

I just want to play with everyone like always, but leaving her alone kind of feels bad.

“Just when I was getting in the mood to farm too... Should we accompany her for a bit?”

“The Net Game Club is a place that cares for its fellow net game players after all.”

Segawa and Master seems to have given in. I guess it’s fine.

“Then let’s hang with her for a bit.”

**Rusian: You dropped by today too huh?**

**Sette: I don't know what I should be doing.**

Well, you were suddenly thrust into a different world after all. And we didn't really do anything much ingame yesterday besides talking about taking you around for sightseeing.

**Rusian: Hm, how about we go around practicing your controls? Come with me, we're going to a place with an enemy suited for such a thing.**

I took Sette-san to the outskirts of town. As soon as we exit town, we found ourselves in the grassy plains. This is where we found a wolf, which seems big enough to bite down one person, wandering around. But even this is just small fry.

**Rusian: To get started, this wolf is going to be your partner as you practice your basic controls.**

"Eh."

Ako in the real world seemed shaken up.

Hey, why are you the one being flustered?

"What is it? If it's just basic controls then I'm sure you too Ako... Hey, you. Don't tell me..."

Did you forget it? Even though I explained it to you that much? Did you just completely forget about the basics of combat?

"N, no. That's not it at all. Yep."

"Come to think of it, I've never seen Ako do combo healing even once."

"Shhh! Shhh!"

"As the Guildmaster, it seems my guidance is not needed here..."

"Master—, please seriously accept our current reality."

That aside, what about Sette-san?

**Rusian: Err, Sette-san's character is a melee type. The same as me and Schwein. The basics are to use normal attacks, guard, counter, and the smash skill. There's also not many of it available to us, but there's also some ranged skills for fighting too.**

*TL note: Although the game references Ragnarok Online in most aspects, this particular aspect of combat seems to reference Mabinogi instead (given the way that basic combat cycles and combos through normal attacks, guard, counter, and smash).*

Sette-san nodded, as if she understood, while she listened.

**Rusian: So then, what you have to do is pretty simple. Generally, just use normal attacks to hit the monster. If it retaliates, use guard. If it looks like it's going to use a close-ranged skill, use counter. And if the monster is defenseless, use smash. If there are still mobs left but are far away from you, you can use your long ranged skills. That's all.**

"That's all. Rusian, did you just say 'That's all'?"

"There's a lot more stuff of course but in the meantime this should work fine."

"I think what Ako means here is that she can't possibly memorize all of that at once, don't you think so?"

"That's right, that's right!"

Ako vehemently said that. Why is it that you're only so passionate when it comes to things you're miserable at, Ako?

"Mm, but don't you think stopping just at this point is bad? Isn't it okay to try and see if she can do more, and if it seems like it's no good, we can tone down the difficulty a little?"

If it worked out like that, it would be fine.

"Indeed. Even I only needed to read the wiki to understand the gist of things."

Master is that type of person after all. Even Sette-san might actually be a fast learner if she tried that. Putting a restraint on how much people can learn like this might actually do more harm than good. After all, there are beginners who independently go deeper into what you've just taught even after teaching them. These fellows are generally the ones who hold a promising future.

"For me, I'm fine with doing it one step a day..."

For Ako, after a night has passed, the stuff she learned earlier in the day

would be soon forgotten so it has always been hard to make progress.

**Rusian: Do you know the controls? Like the button to use a skill for example. ...A'ight, then to start, defeat that wolf over there.**

**Sette: Die—**

With a knife in hand, the sight of a girl assaulting a wolf while saying 'Die' looked pretty dangerous. In addition, the counterattack of an aggressive wolf is also considerably dangerous.

Let's see. As for Sette-san, her first move was to do a normal attack followed with another normal attack. And then a normal, and a normal, and a normal, she kept repeating this pattern. And then finally, as if to naturally match the timing of the counterattack, she finally tried to use her guard. The timing was still a bit off so she kept taking a lot of attacks, but seeing her starting to try out things on her own like this is wonderful.

"This person might have a better sense for this than Ako."

"W, wait. It might be that there's only just a little, tiny, on the molecular level chance that she's a slightly better than me."

But Ako, not wanting to accept reality, approached a wolf close by. She swung her staff as if to squash the wolf, and with a 'Twinkle ☆' it died.

"Uuuuuuu..."

"Well, your level gap is pretty high so it would actually die in one hit. Ako, make sure you keep up your healing too."

And stop carrying around your Pink Star Twinkle Rod with you. There's really no need for that staff whose only use is to have 'Twinkle ☆ Twinkle ☆' come out every time you hit something.

And so, I've trained her in the basics. She herself had good sense and was pretty enthused about it so she learned pretty quick.

**Rusian: Attack, guard, and if you see an opening, use a skill. When the enemy is preparing something, counter it accordingly.**

**Schwein: If you upgrade your weapon, you could finish it with just one skill.**

**Apricot:** If you pay premium, you can fire your skills off as soon as you load them.

**Rusian:** You guys just keep quiet.

A beginner is finally showing some promise so don't go saying unnecessary things and just cheer her on instead.

Sette-san has already mastered basic combat and has, in that small amount time, gotten better at moving accordingly.

**Rusian:** After that, just keep following that pattern while trying to figure out the enemy's movement. Also, when you get new skills, make sure you check their properties so you can build your combo based off of that. You've got a good sense for it so it probably won't take you long to get it.

**Sette:** Thanks, Rusian-kun.

In that short span of time it seems she's already accustomed to chatting and can somewhat properly talk now. And for some reason, she seems to add -kun only to my name.

**Sette:** Rusian-kun, you seem pretty good at this way of teaching, aren't you?

**Rusian:** Why does it sound like you're expecting otherwise?

**Sette:** It's like you're really doing it properly. It's kind of cool.

I was being praised by a beginner in a condescending manner. Just what is with this vague feeling? Should I be happy about it or do I take offense in that?

**Ako:** Please don't use your strange seduction techniques on Rusian.

"Don't start unleashing your jealousy on all fronts."

"Uuu, but..."

"If you mind it that much, how about you look after her?"

"Talking to someone I don't know is scary..."

If you're still bad at communicating ingame then I think there's no saving you.

"That aside, isn't it weird that she's only getting attached to Rusian? Even though she has someone great like me here."

**Schwein: My bad self can also do this, if it's just this much. Nay, this hunk will guide you even better. What say you we go on a little one on one?**

**Sette: Haha.**

There goes Sette-san again.

**Schwein: Hey punk, just what do you find funny every time I speak huh? Are you picking a fight? Because I have one right here ripe for the picking!**

**Sette: Y, you got it wrong. See...**

Her character was nervously trembling. This guy's reason for laughing too much is still unclear.

**Sette: Rusian-kun is just fine after all. He's kind and dependable.**

"...Tch."

Just next to me, a really loathsome clicking of the tongue could be heard.

"Ako, did you just click your tongue?"

"I didn't do it."

"...That so?"

Ako not having the nerve to voice out her thoughtless complaint and just bottling up her irritation deep inside is pretty scary.

**Sette: Rusian-kun, will you teach me some more?**

**Rusian: I'm fine with it but I have to log out soon. Maybe later at night.**

The bell signaling the end for club activities is going to ring soon. After that I'll go home, eat dinner, take a shower, and do my homework. After I'm done with all that, we'll meet up here again. It's always the same pattern.

"Eh—, you're going to accompany her tonight too?"

It seems she cannot stand hiding it anymore as Segawa started to show her irritation.

I get you. I mean I get you but...

"But turning her down here is kind of..."

“Haa. Are you the type that feels good by having beginners warm up to you?”

That’s not it. It’s just that ignoring her here is going to leave a bad aftertaste.

“Then do as you please. I’m going to farm on my own tonight.”

“You, are you really pissed off right now?”

“That girl’s annoying after all.”

Segawa just bickered like a student in grade school.

Did she hate being laughed at that bad? But well, I kind of understand.

“Then I suppose I will be doing that as well. If it’s been sometime since I’ve last fired my Great Magic, I start to feel sick.”

Master too?

“Aah. It’s not that I particularly dislike having fun with beginners...”

She cast her gaze a bit at the female character on her screen and said,

“It’s just that her attitude of wedging herself in the middle of group by way of flattery is something close to what the people I have difficulty in dealing with have.”

“...That’s...”

Master is a good person that has nothing to hide. But on the other hand, there’s no need to fuss about the person she just branded as someone that she has difficulty with. It’s just that she has the same characteristics as Master’s real self, which at the very least is pleasant to me but— at this time, it just caused us trouble.

“I’m going to stay with Rusian!”

“That so.”

Ako said that, but it was plain as day that she was still wary of Sette-san, who was reflected in the screen.

This is the second day that someone from outside the guild has appeared.

And, Alley Cats already seems like it was falling apart.

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## Part 2

No matter the circumstance, Ako just wouldn't let go of me. We're walking home clung together again today.

The club activities are actually there to fix this but I'm a bit relieved that I'm also a part of that.

"This is quite troublesome isn't it?"

"This is troublesome."

We both let out a sigh as we walked side by side.

You could say that we all get along as a group, but just a small incident occurs and this is what happens. Good grief, this is such a big problem— but, even if I say that, the solution to this is actually pretty simple.

"Frankly speaking, I think just honestly rejecting her would've been fine. But that sort of thing is just really not my forte."

"Is that so?"

"Yeah. It's like how someone who is everybody's friend is just needlessly trying to be a virtuous person. I wouldn't really want to say anything that could elicit a feeling of dislike from a person I don't really know well yet, so I got used to just holding it in. Before I knew it, I was already fed up with how I acted ingame."

Even though it was just in the game, I was a complete mess of a good person. In reality, I just make it up as I go but, somehow, in the game, I always properly think of what I should be saying or doing next.

"If it's enough to make her want to quit the game then just reject her!"

"Are you going to be the one doing that?"

"Nope?"

'Of course not, isn't that obvious!', was the manner that she replied.

Of course right. You're that kind of person after all.

“In the end, we all in the club have problems talking to other people, so when it comes to times like this, it’s really troubling.”

“That’s right...”

Speaking of Ako’s communication abilities, if we’re not with her ingame, Ako would just clam up the whole time. Then there’s Schew who’s good at dealing with others in real life but has that bad self persona ingame. For Master, she might not look like it, but she’s pretty anxious around strangers. That made her so reluctant to Sette’s last request earlier that she’d rather play solo. And as for me, I’m just myself, still trying too much to be everyone’s friend while actually being fed up with this act— Really, ours is just a mashup of people who lack interpersonal skills.

“I don’t want to say this but...”

Ako started her sentence like that while looking at her feet.

“Isn’t changing our hangout spot also an option?”

“...To avoid meeting Sette-san?”

“Yup.”

“Hmm—...”

A hangout spot in net games is quite an important thing.

Having a place where you can gather and laze around when you’re free ingame is especially important in a pleasant fantasy game setting such as this as it affects your motivation to play.

If you’re free and you go to this spot, there would be someone there. If you wait there, someone would definitely come. When you’ve finished with what you have to do, you come back here. It’s the important base you have for yourself if you were to consider the game as another one of your worlds.

However, the moment an outsider barges in that place, it would be troublesome. The place you selfishly decided as your hangout spot ingame was a public area. If anyone decides to drop by, you have no right whatsoever to deny them that spot.

That’s why if you would talk about hangout spots, then having it change often

is not necessarily unheard of. There are a lot of guilds that keep moving from place to place that it looks like they're escaping from something.

"But you know, it's not like Sette-san is a bad person or anything."

"That may be so but..."

That's why disappearing like that to run away would leave us with feelings of guilt.

But then again, it's not like I'm saying she's welcome there either.

If you think about the future, when dealing with beginners in the most genuine sense of the word, you have to properly take care of them. But honestly, when you're the one involved in the matter with them, it's pretty bothersome.

"And you see, this is just my personal opinion you see."

"What's the matter?"

Ako was earnestly looking at me with a serious look on her face.

"I really don't like it when Rusian goes to look after other girls."

"Aren't you being too honest there!"

To put it simply, it's jealousy huh!

"But, but! Isn't it fine to just look after me forever! Feeling happy about having other girl characters be attached to you is not allowed!"

S, she's serious. She seriously said that.

You could not see any hint of joking around in Ako's expression.

"In the first place, whenever Rusian looks after other people, you get too energetic about it! You should just be directing all of that energy towards looking after me!"

"Is there just no alternative scenario where my looking after you is not needed?"

"Why are you saying such a sad thing! That's cruel. Are you saying you don't find it fun being with me?"

“I don’t think it’s right to equate being with you to actually looking after you.”

“My favorite motto is ‘Salvation by faith in others’.”

This girl is trash!

She’s trash, she might be trash but, she’s still my wife.

At the very least, I shouldn’t be causing her sadness ingame. I don’t intend to deny that I love her ingame after all.

When she wants me to look after her when she’s feeling down, of course I would want to do that as well.

“...Ah, that’s right. I just came up with a good idea.”

“Yes?”

“How about tonight, we go look for a good convenient place we can gather at that doesn’t stand out? If we happen to find a good spot, we can have everyone transfer there.”

“It’s a date then!”

“...Date, is it?”

“It’s a date. A date. I’ll go and dress up for the occasion okay?”

I just meant it as a fly-by-night where we would be searching for our next spot, but if Ako thinks that, then that’s fine as well.

But she wouldn’t be this happy if I ask her out on a real date, would she?

“.....”

“...? What’s the matter?”

“Ah no, it’s nothing.”

Well, this is just like Ako after all, so it’s fine.

Schew and Master went off to farm. Me and Ako moved our characters away from there so as not to be found, and proceeded to meet up at the place we’ve designated earlier.

**Ako: —And there you have it. I came all dressed up just like I said.**

To Ako, who was smiling from ear to ear as she said that, I answered without hesitation.

**Rusian: Take it off.**

**Ako: Eeh? Right here? In a place like this?**

That's enough of that joke. I don't need it right now.

True to her words, Ako came all dressed up and her appearance right now was that she changed into an extravagant dress.

That's right, it was a pretty extravagant dress. Based on her appearance, you can't even tell what class she is anymore. No matter how you see it, this is clearly that 'dress' whose aim is to transform your avatar.

**Ako: It was really expensive you know—, this one-time use avatar transformation dress.**

**Rusian: But doesn't that greatly lower your movement speed? I told you we would be going around the map checking out places.**

**Ako: Uuu... Its effect is going to run out in just thirty more minutes so please wait until that time.**

*TL note: Probable reference to the item Sweet Memory of Marriage in Ragnarok Online that can be bought for 50K zeny. The effects of this item last for one hour and makes you walk really slow and be unable to participate in combat. Also changes your appearance to a wedding dress.*

She just went and bought some meaningless item at a high price again. It's because you keep wasting money like that your gear is still incomplete.

It can't be helped. I guess we'll have to look around somewhere close by for now.

**Rusian: I'm a bit worried about getting found out if we check places near the usual cafe but... For today, how about we just go around town?**

**Ako: Okaaay.**

With Ako daintily walking by my side in her dress, we leisurely strolled around town.

Come to think of it, we still haven't gone on something like a honeymoon. The four of us are always hanging out together after all, so having time to just the two of us is pretty rare.

"A date... huh."

'I wonder if this is also one of the perks of the family system', was the stupid thing that I thought about.

**Rusian:** To start, when we speak of hangout spots there's that. It's close to the respawn point, and just in front of the player shops. In addition, the warp point for it should already be readily available to us. That place is very convenient and has a lot of people gathering near it that it just ends up being a natural hangout spot for many.

**Ako:** Oh I know that. There's always a lot of people near the respawn point.

*TL note: This most likely refers to the Inside South Prontera save point. If you've played Ragnarok Online back in its hayday (or if you play RO JP, right now), then you should be quite familiar with the spectacle being described here.*

**Rusian:** Right? So for now— we're not going to go there.

**Ako:** We're not?

I nodded in response to her question.

**Rusian:** We're just a small scale guild after all.

We're not looking for somewhere very convenient to stay at, nor are we aiming to be at the top of anything. Just like in real life, what we're looking for is a corner we can just gather to laze around where no one would come to bother us.

**Rusian:** And so, there you have it. Candidate number one is a place just right outside town.

**Ako:** So it's not inside town but a field map right?

**Rusian:** That's right. Because of that, there should be less people around. But since it's close to the entrance of the town, it's still plenty convenient. As a candidate, I'd say it's not half bad.

**Ako:** It's still close to town so the BGM is still relaxing too. It looks pretty spacious here as well so isn't this already a good spot?

*TL note: Basing from above, this could be just outside South Prontera's exit which is also often used as a gathering hub for dailies in RO JP, even now. Also, Ako's shoutout was to one of Ragnarok Online's great BGMs, Streamside (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cCUNruxThQU>).*

**Rusian:** Isn't it? But well—, there's just one problem you see—

**Ako:** Is anything wrong about it?

You see, Ako, it's that thing behind you.

**Ako:** W, what's this? Just right over there... That's a monster right? Eh? Ah, wait for me. I'm going to get attac

Ako just got bitten by the wolf that was running behind her.

It's fine, it's fine. That monster's just small fry after all.

**Rusian:** You see. It's a field map after all, so aggressive monsters could always come and attack you. And well, it's near town so no dangerous monsters should come out, but if you happen to fall asleep here you might wake up to your character being dead. It's not a bad place to meet up per se, but you can't just relax in it either.

This is more of a place where you would gather up before you head out. But if your goal is to just sit around for hours chatting away idly, then this was not suited for that. It was that kind of place.

**Rusian:** I was thinking of seeing how often the enemies actually appear around here, but I guess they do appear quite often. I guess it's safe to say that we should just give up on this one.

As I was saying that, the number of wolves attacking Ako has increased to two. Well of course this is no good.

**Ako:** Uhm, err, Rusian? Could you help me out a bit here?

**Rusian:** It's fine. Even one hit from you is going to kill them instantly.

**Ako:** Err it's not that... If I have this dress equipped, I can't attack.

**Rusian: .....**

**Ako: Kyaaa**

I mercilessly hit the wolves attacking Ako with my shield, which sent them flying.

Candidate number one, rejected. If I pick this place, Ako is going to die.

Argh, let's just go on the next one.

**Rusian: And here you have it, candidate number two. There's really no quests or NPCs here either, but at least it's inside of a building near the middle of town.**

**Ako: This place looks beautiful doesn't it—**

It was a two-story building erected at a waterside. Just looking at the display, you could see that it's intended to be an inn. But since this game has no such systems anyway, these buildings simply exist.

*TL note: This sounds more like the one in Aldebaran but since they're still in town (Ako still has her dress on) this is probably just one of the two inns in Prontera (mostly probably the one on the left side as the right one is the PVP hub). There's no waterside there though so it's probably just made up.*

**Rusian: As long as people don't come here, this would be a pretty good place as well. As long as they don't come, that is.**

**Ako: Do people come here often?**

**Rusian: Often, is not something I'd say... Well, how about we go inside first?**

I quietly slipped into the building with Ako in hand. We looked around while moving forward, checking for any signs of human figures— Just then, inside a single room were the figures of someone else. It was a pair of a male and a female character.

**Ako: It looks like someone is here.**

**Rusian: Looks like it... Yep, I guess we should just pass on this one too.**

**Ako: I guess it can't be helped if someone else was using it before us but... Why do you think those two people are on the bed facing each other?**

**Rusian: ...Dunno. Come on, let's go.**

I don't want to talk about the reason for that. I have to get out of here before Ako realizes it.

I quickly urged her to go, but it seems Ako was faster in thinking, as she stopped her movement.

**Ako: Huh... I got it! Going in a building that looks like it would a good place to get in a good mood, the inn, and sitting on the bed together as male and female— This can only be that!**

**Rusian: It's okay if you don't get it.**

**Ako: Wait, please wait. I've thought about this before too. Rusian keeps saying that the game and reality is different, but if you think about it the other way around, doesn't that mean we're a full-fledged couple ingame?**

**Rusian: That's right. I love you Ako.**

I said something embarrassing in an attempt to throw her off.

However, Ako looked pretty happy as she kept nodding her head and continued what she was saying without interruption.

**Ako: Me too! But see, what that means is, it's fine to do things a couple would do ingame. For example, just like that couple over there, we could also engage in some hot and steamy cybering.**

She went and said it. The word cybering she just mentioned refers the act of engaging in perverted acts ingame just by using text.

**Rusian: We won't do that!**

**Ako: I'll make sure to properly lead you! Rusian's fingers softly trace down my body, and with that luscious sensation, you send my spine into a feeling of complete ecstasy.**

**Rusian: If you say any more than that, I'm seriously going to break up with you.**

I'm going to imagine it after all! I'll unintentionally keep thinking about it! Her long black hair spread out on the bed, as the figure of Ako lay there. The

sensation of touching that body of hers, the expression that she's going to make from that, and her sweet fragrance... Even though I've never seen it once, I won't be able to stop fantasizing about it!

**Ako: Uuuu..., I'm very sorry—**

**Rusian: If you're going to apologize then just don't do it in the first place!**





Just who or what would go ahead and say something like that to their lonely classmate? Is this torture? A punishment game? Or maybe this was meant to finish me off?

Candidate number two, also rejected. If I pick this one, I'll get the urge to do it with Ako.

**Rusian: There's only one place left I can think of. It's not too promising but I figured we might as well look.**

**Ako: Okaaay.**

And so, we have arrived at the last spot. It was the graveyard behind the church on the outskirts of town.

*TL note: This is, as it literally says, the graveyard behind the church northeast inside Prontera.*

**Rusian: The ambience of the last candidate is definitely not that good, so I thought there would be no people around but...**

**Ako: There's a lot of them here, isn't there?**

It looks like it was already being used as a gathering spot since there were a pretty decent amount of people gathered here.

This place is not completely out of the question, but it seems there's just no room for us here.

And here I thought it would be fine if it was this desolate graveyard.

**Rusian: It's a shame but this place is also—**

'...no good so let's go home', was what I was going to say before someone called out from center of that group.

**Nekohime: What's this? Rusian? Ako-chan?**

**Rusian: Eh... Nekohime-san?**

The one who snuck out from the middle of that group was a character I knew fairly well.

Oh, it was Nekohime-san, who I thought was too busy with her job to log in so I could rarely see her ingame.

**Nekohime: What are the two of mew doing here?**

**Ako: We're currently on a date.**

Ako unwaveringly declared that to Nekohime-san. Do you have no shame at all?

**Rusian: We're just err, taking a little walk... or something like that. What about you Nekohime-san?**

**Nekohime: Ah, uhm, that's... Meow should I put it...**

It seems she had a hard time answering as she mumbled. Would you even normally gather in a place like this?

As she was saying that, another one from that group snuck out and momentarily swung his huge sword around.

**†Cloud†: And just who the heck are you, knave—!**

Err... Just what was that. That strange person just yelled at me. But why?

**†Cloud†: You've confounded Nekohime-sama! Just what did you say to her!**

Voices shouting out 'That's right, that's right!' could be heard.

Just what is... this, err what? What's with this situation?

**Rusian: Ah no, I didn't do anything but... Nekohime-san? Those people are?**

**Nekohime: Uhm, they're people from a guild that I was in bepurr. Though we were all split up, they would sometimes gather up like this and I was fortunate enough to get acquainted with them again so...**

**†Cloud†: We are of the guild Nekohime's Elite Guard! As long as we're here, we shan't let anyone lay a finger on Nekohime-sama!**

**Rusian: Ah, please excuse us. We'll be heading back now.**

I understand the situation now. I've understood everything now.

I'm just going to pretend this never happened and leave. That's for the best.

A wise man strays not into danger. Leave no room for misinterpretation. The

wise thing to do in a tight situation is to retreat.

**Nekohime:** Just a meowment, Rusian! Meow got it all wrong! Everyone is just purring around! They're really just guild members from before that gathered up to talk a bit about the past— **Rusian:** Let's go Ako. Nekohime-san is already a being that has far surpassed us.

**Ako:** Ok. ...Rusian, please stay with me forever, okay?

**Rusian:** Yeah, we'll be together forever.

**Nekohime:** Meow got it all wroooooooooong!

Candidate number three, rejected. It was already the base of operations for the new religion, Nekohime-ism.

**Rusian:** With this, all of the candidates I had in mind were rejected. Unfortunate as that may be.

**Ako:** It can't be helped. Everywhere we went there were people all around.

I know right? People who wouldn't think of just leaving their character anywhere in town would generally look for their own place. If it's a popular spot, it would immediately be buried under a large crowd.

And so, me and Ako went back to the usual cafe.

**Sette:** You're late.

**Rusian:** Ah... Yeah...

**Ako:** Ehe, ehehe...

To the sight of Sette-san, who waited for us in the cafe as if it were a natural thing, we could only bow our heads in dejection.



And you thought there is Never a girl online?

別ゲーじゃーむこ



## Chapter 3: Another Game Collection

*TL note: Chapter title reference is Kantai Collection*

“...What should we do about this?”

I was sitting in front of the PC with a complicated look on my face. While I was looking at everyone around me, I absentmindedly said this out loud.

“‘What’s the matter?’, is not something I’m going to ask you. You gonna play LA or not?”

“I will but...”

But, me aside, nobody else was also starting up LA.

It’s only been a few days since Sette-san has appeared, but the mood around the guild has turned pretty sour.

In the end, our little excursion to find a new hangout spot ended without us finding a solution to this deadlock.

“What? Do you not feel good unless you’re getting fawned over?”

“What’s with you? Why are you suddenly so hostile?”

“As if I’m being like that.”

You’re not Ako after all, so I’m not going to give you attention like that. And stop being in a bad mood already.

For now, Ako has been going along with me but... I don’t know if it’s because she’s stressed out that everyone’s been at odds with each other, but recently, she seems to look a bit unstable.

Master is just like she always is but— that’s no reason for her to just go along with me. For better or for worse, she still adopts this calm demeanor.

“When we login, she’s going to be there again, no?”

To answer the words that were just muttered, Segawa muttered in reply as well.

“That’s not the case here. You’re just going to lure her over again.”

She deliberately picked those choice of detestable words.

“...Everyone wants to play together, right?”

“I guess.”

Those feelings were our response to Ako’s honest opinion.

We were relatively doing pretty well with our group of four playing this game, so there were not many chances on having an outsider join in.

Sometimes, we would group up with people who were close to our level and gear, but we generally have not played with something like a beginner yet.

As expected, not having playstyles, level tiers and gear match, and yet still trying to play together is complicated. We’re not able to fit with the hardcore players, but fitting in with someone who just started playing is not an easy task either. Putting aside people playing games for the first time, there’s not much newbies in LA right now so ignoring them is kind of...

“Hmm...”

“Uu—”

I kept staring at my screen during this delicate situation. What should I do.

“Ah..., Hey.”

I just suddenly thought of something.

I said that in a slightly cheerful tone as everyone absentmindedly turn their gaze at me.

“I’ve said this before, but it’s not like this is the LA Club right? We’re a Net Game Club. So there’s no problem if we go and play another net game right?”

“...That’s, exactly as you have put it. As long as it’s an online game, anything should be fine.”

“Are we going to play another game?”

In response to my words, my fellow guild members who were slacking began to regain their footing.

“I see. A different game huh?”

“Yeah. Isn’t this fine sometimes too?”

Previously, this idea was shot down right away, but everyone right now seems to be delighted at what I’ve just said.

“I think it’s okay.”

“That’s true. I guess sometimes is okay.”

“Splendid. Then, shall we get to selecting that game?”

Y, yeah. That passed in one go. So there you have it. Today’s club activities will not be composed of LA.

It’s not like I hated doing anything with Sette-san but... Ah, that doesn’t matter now. We’re just going to play another game. It’s not like we’re intentionally avoiding her in LA.

And if we’re talking about how playing a different game is going to help Ako differentiate games from reality, it’s actually pretty significant. If we switch games, our status ingame would also change. Her view of me that’s inseparable from ‘Rusian’ might change as well.

—I’m currently aware that all of that is actually just an excuse. When I think that I can run away from something unpleasant, I can’t help but be enthusiastic about it.

“What game are we gonna play?”

“Let’s see. There’s various categories for net games. If you include those console games with coop functionality, then their number is as numerous as there are stars in the sky.”

“But those don’t really feel like net games do they?”

“For the time being, I think the common course of action right now is to try out a well-known game. I would like to adopt that as one of the ideas in the Net

Game Club's basic education."

"What's with that obligatory sounding thing?"

That's an obligation you know. An obligation.

"For me, I'd like to try out this farming simulation game!"

"Just what do you intend to do in a sandbox farming game with a lot of players!"

We just really got fired up all of a sudden. This is quite convenient for me though, honestly.

"Then how about... This!"

Ako said this as she pulled on my sleeve.

"I want to play a game where you use guns to shoot people to death!"

"Okay Ako, that's a yellow card."

"Eeh!?"

In reaction to her dangerous statement, Segawa presented Ako with the yellow card.

*TL note: In American soccer, a yellow card is used to caution players, while a red card results in the player's dismissal from the field of play. Thus, yellow cards are used to punish milder forms of misconduct than red cards. – Google*

Yeah. Even I think that is reasonable. What you said just now was a proclamation of war to a large portion of gamers everywhere.

"By the way, what happens when you get a red card?"

"You'll have to go to school, but participating in club activities will be forbidden."

"That's too mean..."

That's why you should watch what you say from now on.

"Then, are we going to try out the FPS or TPS shooting games? I was aware this might happen, so I've looked into them beforehand. For the time being, what do you say we try out something free-to-play until we judge it to be a

good one? Doing it this way would not be unfavorable to us.”

“Sure.”

The game that Master picked was an FPS game called Ultra Force. It’s not exactly as Ako meant, but for what it’s worth, I think it’s unmistakably a game where you shoot people with guns. It’s just that saying that out loud is banned.

*TL note: This is a reference to the Online FPS Special Force.*

I began installing the game from the official site, which seems to give off a slight feeling of nostalgia.

“Rusian, Rusian, where do I go to register?”

“You can see ‘New Player Registration’ written over there can’t you? Look. You click on here and then you enter your name and address here.”

“Tag! You’re it Rusian!”

“You should do it yourself... geez. So, what’s your address?”

The client size wasn’t that big so the installation finished pretty quickly.

“Alright, let’s go do this. How about we just go enter some beginner room and start fighting?”

“Yeah. I don’t really understand the controls yet after all.”

“I see. My rank is still not high enough for me to use my premium weapons.”

“Why are you buying premiums right off the bat Master?”

With my doubtful gaze, no, actually, with my curious gaze, I said that to Master.

“Is there anything strange about it? This is what you would call something like an offering. When a game you had fun playing in Open Beta starts with their official release, that is, when a game you have high hopes for is released, wouldn’t you put in a bit of money right away?”

“I won’t do that.”

I’ve heard of people doing that but I didn’t expect it to be someone I knew. As I expected, the greed of net gamers run deep.

It's in this manner that games, where it looks like the users were the ones who presented the idea of 'please milk us dry' premium system just because they were presented with good management, are made.

"For the time being, let's do this. Is everyone present in the room?"

'Yeah—', and with that, the match started.

The rule is Team Deathmatch. To put it simply, it's a team versus team shootout.

"Teeemu Dessmaachu!"

"Ako, you don't have to repeat the signal for the start of the round."

I'm irritated that I thought her weird pronunciation of it was pretty good.

"Does everyone have a grasp of the basic controls? This room has friendly fire on, so watch your fire."

Friendly Fire, that is, the ability to hit your allies with your own attacks. In this room, hitting and killing your allies is possible. If you keep doing it too much, there are instances where you'll also be kicked. Of course, if you don't mean to do it, the chances of it happening are pretty low.

"Then for now, I'm going to go dive in and shoot someone."

"That's just like you. Well, shall we go then?"

The sound of Schew's weapons rattling could be heard as she kept changing them to check. And then, Ako was muttering to herself, "Uhm, this button is..."

Something like that.

Right after that, 'Fire in the hole!' could be heard from all four of our speakers at the time.

Boom! With a thunderous roar, our field of vision was covered in white.

"...eh?"

"Oh?"

After the light and smoke have disappeared, my health was cleanly reduced to zero, and reflected in the screen was the sight of fallen soldiers lying face

down on the ground.

“...Ako, you’re incredible. Getting a triple kill right off the bat like that.”

“It was all allies though.”

“So, sorry—!”

“I see. You sent a hand grenade rolling at our feet.”

I did not expect my first death to come from Ako blowing herself up.

“I’ve thought about it but, don’t you think Ako would be more suited for sniping?”

“Sniping, is it?”

Ako as a sniper huh. She looks like she would just be camping though.

Camping, to be more specific, a camping sniper, is a sniper who stays as far as they can from the front lines while they keep taking calculated shots. In this case, no one but the sniper benefits from this kind of gameplay. As a result, they are shunned by both friend and foe alike.

But even with that said, it’s much better than blowing up your allies with a hand grenade.

“Would I be able to use something like a rifle...?”

“I have a nice plan for that. Listen closely Ako, just think of all the enemies as normies.”

“Normies... The enemies are all normies...”

She kept muttering that. It’s kind of scary.

“Hey, we’re going already. So all I have to do is get two kills in to turn my K/D ratio around!”

“Ah, yeah.”

We once again ran out to battle— However, we suddenly stopped in our tracks.

In the area around what was considered the front line, sporadic explosions were occurring. It didn’t look like we could advance.

Uwa, just what is this, this rain of hand grenades.

On their side, it was shouts of “Konbora!”, while on our side, shouts of “Fire in the Hole!” whenever someone threw a grenade.

*TL note: コンボラ is simply the Arabic word for grenade that could be heard in CoD when middle eastern soldiers throw grenades.*

“Gyaaah, I was trying to run away from a grenade when another one showed up where I ran to.”

“Schew... We just lost a precious ally.”

I have to do enough for her part as well. I weaved my way past the barrage of hand grenades and moved forward.

As I was avoiding the explosions, I hid in the shadow of a container that looked like it was purposely placed there. That mountain load of grenades kept coming but the enemy was nowhere to be found.

Shortly after I was feeling relieved from that, an enemy soldier in a black faceguard suddenly jumped out in front of me.

“Ah, crap.”

I let my guard down. In that moment, I couldn’t move my fingers. The enemy reflexes were pretty good however as they already aimed their sight at me. I’m going to get shot.

In that moment, blood came spurting out of the enemy’s head and they fell face down.

“I did it Rusian. You damned normie. Know your place.”

“Was that you just now Ako? You saved me.”

I did not expect Ako to show me such a skillful headshot. That was surprising.

“Leave it to me. I won’t let them lay a hand on Rusian.”

“Ah, yeah.”

Ako is being so dependable. Just what is this uncomfortable feeling? It feels kind of pleasant but also rather vexing.

“Fufufu, I’ll cleanly blow that head off your shoulders.”

“Wait, you’re scaring me a bit here.”

“Aaaaah darn! Another hand grenade!”

Schew dove in again and died. What are you? A wild boar?

*TL note: The word used here was actually イノシシ(Wild boar). This is a reference to wild boar plays which mean careless plays that just charge straight on so I could have decided to use Leeroy for it (english equivalent), but decided not to, as it would dismiss the other joke (Schwein being a pig and all).*

“By the way, what are you doing Master?”

“I’m clearing the map. I’m setting up claymore mines on places that look like the enemy will absolutely have to pass through to blow them up.”

“What an evil tactic!”

“Heddoshoootto! I did it Russian!”

She’s all fired up for a game she’s playing for the first time.

Schew, who doesn’t like losing, looks like she won’t stop until she turns around that K/D ratio. Ako is unexpectedly doing a lot for the team. And Master, who kept setting up underhanded traps, would look happy whenever she caught one in any of them.

Ah, me? I’m the one with the worst score. Leave me alone.

FPS is not my specialty after all. Even if I play it, my level won’t rise and my character won’t get any stronger right. Sure, improving your player skill is nice, but I’d like a special privilege for playing for a long time. If there isn’t, I just lose my motivation to play. There’s people like that too right?

That aside, on the next day...

Unusually, I spotted Ako that morning on my way to school.

For some reason, she looked frightened as she restlessly looked around while walking. She was so restless that if I were a suspicious character, she would notice me immediately.

I approached her from the back and tapped her shoulder.

“Yo Ako, good morning.”

“Hiiuuu!?”

Ako completely froze up but then limply loosened up as soon as she recognized it was me.

“Aah, Rusian. I thought you were an enemy.”

“Just where in the world would something like an enemy even appear.”

“But, don’t you feel like an enemy soldier would come out of that corner?”

“I hate myself for kind of getting that.”

A short while after playing FPS games, even though you’re just walking, you’d find yourself intuitively clearing out areas you’re passing through.

“In short, it’s scary so how about we go to school while holding hands together?”

“That’s not allowed.”

“Uuu, Rusian is mean.”

It’s embarrassing, and we would be standing out, so it’s no good after all. But I can’t deny that I’m a bit attracted to the idea. Just like this, I could already imagine having our fingers entwined together.

“Well, I could at least carry your bag for you. Give it here.”

“Ah, this feels just like how normies do it!”

“I know right? I know right?”

It really gives off that feeling like it’s the springtime of your youth that I just feel happy about it.

No, I’m not treating Ako like that. I’m not doing this as the actions of an online hookup predator. This is safe, safe.

*TL note: I really don’t know what to use for 直結厨 here. I just opted to go with something like an online hookup predator here. This was previously translated as E-flirt in the previous volume by taptap but it feels like that is taking it too lightly as the aim of such a person here is to get in someone’s pants*

*in real life that's why Rusian is so vehement against being labeled as one.*

In comparison to those people walking in front of us with their hands held together, we look pretty normal.

“But I guess holding hands while walking to school is... something I’m really jealous of.”

“Don’t look at me. Doing something like that here looks like we’re just showing off as a challenge to others and I really don’t want us getting involved in something like that.”

“So you say Rusian, but I still have a bit of murderous impulse left over.”

Don’t have something like a murderous impulse in the first place.

“Ah, Rusian. I think I’m suited for FPS after all.”

“What’s the matter? Suddenly saying that.”

“If I had a rifle in my hands right now, I could definitely shoot their heads off!”

“Stop that!”

“Fufufufu, beautiful—”

*TL note: Reference to Cpt. Macmillan from COD4 Modern Warfare.*

No good. This is no good.

At the sight of Ako, delivering headshots to those normies in her head, I trembled with fear.

“I thought she was getting better too...”

I was so worn out from preventing Ako on her rampage that before I knew it, it was already lunch break.

Here I thought Ako’s habit of not being able to differentiate between games and reality was kind of fixing itself already, but in reality this was not the case.

Ah well. I should just hurry up and eat my lunch.

With a heave-ho, I moved my desk towards the guys near me and just kind of put my desk together with theirs. Since I clearly do not hang out with these guys after school, to me, this lunch break is an important time of communication

with them. I suppose I'll go fulfill my role as the open otaku then. If I don't know the topic, then I'll just keep quiet.

"By the way Nishimura, I'd like your advice on something."

"What is it?"

One of my classmates had this pointlessly serious look on his face as he said this.

"You're good with computers right?"

"Even if you ask me, I wouldn't say that I'm actually good with them myself but, I'm probably at least more informed about it than you are."

I can't really compare with even just the soles of people who are actually well-versed in this kind of thing, but compared to the highschool students around me, I'd say I'm more informed than them. It's generally that.

He nodded to my vague answer and said,

"That's good enough. If you know about it, please teach me."

"Teach you what?"

"A way on how to avoid other people finding pictures and videos I've saved on the computer."

.....Uhh.

"Is the PC at your home for family use?"

"...Yeah."

"That's..."

A, a very pressing matter!

I myself went through severe hardships just so I could get my hands on my own PC, so I completely understand how he feels.

So, I will intentionally not ask what those pictures were about. Take it as a show of my warrior's compassion.

"Let's see. Right now, I could only think of five ways you could go about this."

"Seriously? As expected of Nishimura, you're really dependable!"

“Eh, there’s ways to do that?”

My classmates who heard this listened even more closely. As expected, this is really a pressing matter for guys who use a PC that’s for communal use.

“The ways to go about it would be to one, change your settings to not show hidden files and then just set them to hidden. Two, you could encrypt the folder with a password. Three, you could use specialized software to hide it. And four, saving them to a USB memory card and making sure you don’t leave any traces in the PC is something you could also do. And if possible, for that last bit, having a separate device that you can store away would give the most sense of security.”

“I see, I see.”

He kept nodding as he listened earnestly.

“However, not having that device on hand is not just the problem here. There’s also cases where people would grow suspicious of you inserting something on to the PC everytime. And past that, if you still honestly want to hide the data in your PC, there’s my recommended method, the ‘Unlimited Fade Works’.”

*TL note: I just made this up from 隱蔽波狀攻擊. If you have better ideas for this (or if this is actually a reference) please let me know.*

“What’s with that cool sounding strategy!”

It’s not cool at all. The way to go about it is very simple and straightforward.

“To put it simply, just make a folder with any letters from the alphabet. Inside that folder, create an innumerable amount of said folders with random letters. And from this very complicated structure, there would be one folder that would be the correct one. ‘No matter how hard one looks it would be just a bunch of folders, and no matter how much they struggle to venture inside, they won’t be able to find the correct route to your files.’ is the whole idea behind this. That is the ‘Unlimited Fade Works’. What’s more, if you change the file extensions of the goods from jpg and avi to something else, there would be no counterattack for this strategy—”

Suddenly, a ringing tone going ‘pin pon pon poon’ could be heard from the

classroom speaker.

[“This is your president Goshouin speaking. Class 1–2’s Nishimura-kun, Please promptly proceed to the student council’s office. —I repeat, Class 1–2’s Rusi... Ni, Nishimura-kun. Come to the student council office quick. That is all.”]

‘Pin pon pon poon’. And then, the broadcast ended.

As I thought, that was the voice of Master. But her character was off after that part that where she almost said Russian. Just what was with that ‘Come to the student council quick’? ‘Come here quick’ she says.

“The one being called just now was Nishimura right? But you’re not in the student council right? Just what did you do that the president had to personally call for you?”

“By the way, when you say the president, she’s that right? The one who’s the daughter of a bigshot in our school and someone with top marks.”

“But she keeps her distance from other students, just like that of an empress.”

“And from that person you just received an order to come quickly.”

“That’s how it looks like—”

Being called out during lunch break is pretty rare, but I’m sure it’s nothing big. We’re talking about Master here after all. As I was being carefree thinking that, just directly opposite me was everyone who gave me a faraway look while they all distanced themselves from me.

“Goodbye Russian, and be well...”

“When you get back, let’s continue this topic.”

“Why are you all raising a death flag for me?”

With a tap, someone just hit my shoulder. When I went to look, it was Takasaki looking at me with a huge smile giving me a thumbs up.

“Entrust Ako-chan to me!”

“Takasaki, Ako told me that she just really instinctively cannot accept you.”

“Guhaaaaaa!”

“Takasaki!”

“Takasaki! Takasaki—!”

I just left Takasaki who just splendidly rejected and stood up from my seat. I also took the bread that I was having for lunch with me. As I was about to leave the room, the girls who have joined their desks together that were making a fuss turned their gaze on to me. ‘You just heard that sudden broadcast right?’, is what I tried to ask Segawa with my gaze while she was looking at me.

(“Hey, did you hear anything about this?”)

(“Nope. This is pretty rare, calling you at this time.”)

(“I know right... I wonder what she needs me for.”)

In response to me tilting my head, Segawa just gave me a small shrug.

(“There’s just no knowing what Master is scheming.”)

(“Well of course right.”)

You’re not wrong there.

I at least have faith that it wasn’t done out of ill will.

(“Well, I’ll just try and go over there for now.”)

(“Yeah, yeah. Good luck.”)

What’s with that attitude as if it were somebody else’s problem— well, it’s not like I know that for certain yet, but there’s an 80% chance I’m sure it isn’t. With just a little bit of gestures, we were able to tell each other what we wanted to say.

But since Segawa and I are capable of communicating without words like this, why is it that my wife, Ako, is that out of sync with me? Maybe the truth is she really gets it but just pretends not to?

“Akane, you really get along with Nishimura-kun huh.”

“Hii?”

Akiyama-san was grinning while she was looking at us.

Segawa worryingly pulled on one of hair twintails.

“After all, just now, you were talking to Rusian while just looking at him right? It feels like that ‘communicating without words’ sort of thing right?”

“Wh, what are you...”

Oh, Segawa is about to blow her fuse. Calm down, calm down, calm down. Getting shaken up here is just going to add more trouble after all.

“Akiyama-san, how about you leave it at that? I’m the one going to be on the receiving end of the retaliation to that sarcasm you know.”

‘You see?’, I said that as I forced out a smile. Normally, this would be over with her just apologizing and then laughing it off.

But Akiyama-san doesn’t seem convinced as she was nodding.

“I just thought of putting that out there as a joke so you can laugh at me—, but Nishimura-kun properly covered for Akane here huh—. You’re really good at taking care of others huh, Nishimura-kun.”

“Ha...?”

“Why do I have to be covered for by something like that. Seriously, stop that. It really feels gross.”

“I’m telling you, that face that looks like you hate it is already kind of, you know—?”

It looks like she still had something to say, but Segawa’s gaze was already telling me to hurry up and get out of here so I obediently left the classroom. ‘I’ll do something about it afterwards.’, is what she probably thought.

Though recently, Akiyama-san has been trying to draw a connection between me and Segawa. It would be good to stop her before she goes and reveals the other’s secret but— as I was thinking that, I’ve arrived at the student council office. It was a room I’ve already visited before.

Just in case, I went and knocked on the door.

“Uhm—, it’s Nishimura.”

“Well done coming here. You may enter.”

The arrogant voice that could be heard coming from the inside was Master’s.

This manner of speaking really suits her that it's amazing.

"Then, excuse me..."

I opened the door without reservation and peeked inside. Right there was,

"Welcome back, Rusian."

A smile that went from ear to ear appeared on Ako's face. It was the kind of smile that a newlywed wife would have.

Bang! I reactively shut the door.

"Err... T, that just now was..."

Creeeeeeeeeeeeak. A grating noise could be heard as the door started to open.

"Ru—si—a—n—?"

"Hiii!?"

As the door opened with a creaking noise, right there was Ako, who had a reproachful look on her face. Uwah, scary. I feel like I'm going to get cursed. Actually, I think I might already have been.

"Why did you close the doooooor?"

"Sorry, it was on reflex."

"That kind of conditioned reflex is weird! If it was me in Rusian's place, even if it was the boy's locker room, I would have dove in without thinking about it!"

"For the sake of your school life from now on, we should really fix that sickness of yours."

If you really did that, it would be big trouble you know.

"Well, there's no need to stand around while talking. Come on in."

Master said that from inside the room. Though Ako still looked a bit reproachful, she straightened out her back and intruded on the student council office.

Among the desks that seemed like it was arranged in the shape of a circle for use in meetings, I sat on the one directly across Master.

“So then, was the two of you coming together like this another one of Ako’s schemes?”

“I’m sorry to disappoint you, but Ako has nothing to do with this.”

What, is that so? I figured it was just Ako scheming something again.

“I’m seriously doing my best you know. I keep quiet during class and breaks. I also wanted to throw a Konbora on the people gathered at the school store but I held myself back.”

“Though you weren’t doing your best when you were thinking about it.”

Also, it’s okay to make a bit of noise during breaks. You don’t have to keep quiet during that time.

“So, if that’s the case, what were the two of you doing here?”

“Is that not obvious!”

With an ‘Ehem’, Master puffed out her chest.

“I’m playing out the role of a ‘Student Council President who gives consultation to her juniors who are anxious about their school life’.”

“And I’m playing out the role of the ‘First Year Student anxious about her school life who seeks consultation from the Student Council President’.”

Ako went ‘How was that?’, when she finished her sentence.

“You would monopolize use of the student council office for that kind of excuse...”

“I am upset that you would think it as an excuse. That is a single fact that I’ve simply taken from the current situation.”

“As unfortunate as that may seem too.”

If they were properly doing a consultation then that would be true. Ako has anxieties about her school life after all, so consulting someone is an option. As I was looking at Ako, a sweet smile showed on her face as she said, “I was surprised you know? This is the first time that the unreliable Master did something like this.”

“Although even if you come to me for advice, I have no idea on what to say.”

‘Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha!’. The two of them laughed as they happily got along.

“What the heck is that...”

I let out a sigh as I proceeded to take a bite of out my lunch. I don’t really hate the taste of a cold croquette sandwich that much.

Coincidentally, my lunch consists of 80% food from the school store and 20% food made by Ako. Originally, I would have brought a boxed lunch from home, but since Ako would sometimes make me lunch, this soon changed to bread from the school store.

That’s not just it though. Ako herself said that she would be making me lunch everyday, but she would often have excuses like she was sleepy, or she didn’t get enough sleep and wasn’t feeling well so she didn’t get to make it that often. I wouldn’t want to seem entitled complaining about it though, so I just gratefully received her offer whenever she felt like making it.

“Couldn’t you actually just watch the class in a screen while staying here alone? —Ah! If I could just watch the class in a screen from home, I wouldn’t have to set a single step outside my room right!? Isn’t that just perfect!?”

“What would you do about PE then?”

“I’ll exercise in LA!”

“That’s just plainly going out to hunt mobs isn’t it?”

If you could consider hunting physical education then I’d be getting full marks.

Since I’m eating just bread, it wouldn’t take up a lot of time. As I nonchalantly offered up that bread to my stomach, Master had also cleaned up her boxed lunch.

“For what was it that you called me for again president?”

“I told you you did not need to be so formal. Rusian, I just have a bit of an errand to ask of you.”

“Wouldn’t someone you know in the student council be okay for that kind of thing?”

“Rusian, try to think if I have such acquaintances that I can freely ask for such

a thing and then try asking me that question again, would you?”

She sweetly smiled at me. ‘If you say the same thing again, I will expel you where you stand’ was the kind of fearsome pressure that I felt. I’m sorry. I’m so very sorry.

“...Ah no, it’s nothing.”

“Very well. Then let us go.”

In response to us standing up, Ako hurriedly raised her hand.

“Are you going somewhere? Then I’ll go with—”

“Our destination is the faculty room.”

“Have a safe trip!”

And with that, she immediately put her hand down.

Her change in attitude was pretty quick. This girl, really.

“You don’t have to worry about it. It’s nothing big really. Come follow me.”

“Good luck—!”

Ako’s flutteringly waved her hand as she saw us off.

Damn it, I wanted to leisurely spend the break with Ako too.

“Sorry for making you come all the way here.”

Waiting in the faculty room was someone who had her hands slapped together, Nekohime-san— Saitou-sensei.

“It’s no problem at all. Please leave it to us, the Modern Electronics Communication Game Club.”

Master proudly puffed out her chest as she just assumed responsibility for something we don’t even know yet. Just what were we called here for?

“Err... What should I be doing?”

“Well you see, I’d like you to take a look at this PC. It’s Kashiwagi-sensei’s though.”

Sensei uninterestedly tapped the case of a desktop PC.

“‘You computer’s security is at risk! Our support for your OS is ending soon!’ was the kind of news that Kashiwagi-sensei saw so he forcibly updated his OS. He had a bad feeling about it somewhere along the way so he interrupted that update and it’s been acting strange ever since.”

“Well of course that’s going to happen.”

Interrupting an update like that is one of the prime examples of dangerous things you could do to a PC. It would be even stranger for something to not happen to it in that case.

“It seems to have been interrupted before any critical components were affected so he was able to get majority of it back to how it was. But the system seems to be unstable at some bits, particularly, Excel doesn’t seem to work...”

“So we’re here to fix that?”

“That’s how it is.”

In short, it’s similar to what just happened in the classroom earlier. If you were going to ask something of us, of course it would be about this huh—. But well, this is much better than having someone ask what’s a PC made of or if I could build them a spec for one.

“So then, when I checked with him, it seems the system was set to automatically create a restore point three days ago. Here’s the Excel installation CD. In the worst case scenario, here’s also the OS installation disk. Please, please, only use this as a last resort. Since if you do that, lunch break would end before the backup finishes restoring.”

“.....Haa.”

Just now, our client presented us with all the methods we could use to resolve this issue. Is there even a need for me here?

When you play something like net games, you’d end up learning more about computers on your own accord. Well of course, Nekohime-san would be able to do something like this herself.

“Uhm, Neko— Saitou-sensei, you can fix it on your own right?”

“No way, it’s impossible. I don’t know much about something like

computers.”

She said that while showing a friendly smile, free of malice.

“Why is something like Segawa’s situation also... Ah well, I’ll do it. It’s not that big of a deal after all.”

“Thanks. For what it’s worth, that’s school property, so I’ll be supervising you just to make sure you don’t see anything you shouldn’t be.”

I don’t think I’ll have room to do anything like that though. To start, let’s restore the system to that restore point, and if it works, we can reinstall Excel. In the worst case scenario, we can do a full backup and do a clean install. That’s what Nekohime-san said.

The first thing we did, the restoration, took a couple of minutes. The computer let out a whirr as we watched over it.

“How is it Nishimura? Do you think you can fix it?”

“Hmm, I can’t say that yet.”

“Oh is that so.”

Kashiwagi-sensei, a Japanese history teacher in his late forties, called out to me as he let out a wry smile. I’m also taking a class under him, but I’ve never seen him hand out any sort of intricately made printout even once. He’s not good at dealing with computers, probably.

“For now, we’re going to see if it starts. If it runs here then it should be easy... Oh.”

Displayed in the screen was the startup window of Excel.

“Ah it worked. Haa—, You fixed it just like that. When your ol’ sensei here tried to mess with it, I couldn’t even get it to start.”

“This is just a matter of knowing or not knowing it after all.”

The internet is a huge place, so it’s certain that you’ll find someone else who encountered a problem you’ve faced. If you learn from their experience, solving ordinary problems like this should be a piece of cake.

“I almost didn’t get the tests prepared in time. Thanks a lot, Nishimura.”

Kashiwagi-sensei happily said that from the bottom of his heart.

And in the bottom of my heart, I was regretting what I had just done.

“...I shouldn’t have fixed it.”

“That won’t change anything. Just go and study.”

‘Hahaha’, our teacher laughed as he said that. Darn it, you’re the only one that got his problem solved that’s why you’re able to laugh like that.

“But, this Modern Electronic something Club of yours is unexpectedly doing a good job isn’t it, Goshouin?”

“To put the skills of our highly motivated members to use, I believe an occasion to practice the craft is needed. We’re always looking to help if you need it.”

“Hahaha, then I will leave things like this to your care.”

“Understood, we will be waiting.”

Master puffed out her chest. Even if you say that, it’s just, you know? Ours is a Net Game Club not a Computer Repair Club.

“Thanks a lot, you two. If it was just me, I just couldn’t do it.”

“Haa...”

No, you can definitely do it. As I was holding back on giving out that retort, Saitou-sensei smiled and gave me a wink as if to dodge the issue. W, well, it’s fine. It’s nothing big after all. That just made my heart skip a beat, is NOT what happened at all okay?

“Well then, please excuse us.”

“Excuse us.”

Staying in the faculty room for that long was pretty uncomfortable so we hurried up and escaped. In the hallway brimming with people, just outside the faculty room, I turned to ask Master who had a look of satisfaction on her face.

“So, what was with that request Master? There wasn’t really a need for us to be there, was there?”

“That’s not true at all.”

Master slyly smiled.

“Nishimura-kun, this school has no computer club. Did you know about this?”

“There weren’t any during the introduction of clubs so I figured there wasn’t any.”

If there was, I probably would’ve joined it. I’m a bit interested in it after all.

But I’m sure that club wouldn’t have cute girls like we do in the Net Game Club.

“The reason for it is that, in our school, there is not a single teacher who is knowledgeable about modern electronics engineering.”

“Not a single one? Really?”

“Undoubtedly. If it was bare minimum knowledge about it we’re talking about, then there should be a number of them here, but that’s all there is. On that matter, there is no one who could respond to emergencies related to electronic devices like this.”

Isn’t that troubling then? If you keep bringing it to the shop when you run into a little trouble like this, there’d be no end to it.

“And then here lies our time to shine. Originally, they would have had to pay money for this to get fixed, but having the students fix it for free must be a pretty pleasant feeling for the teachers. The feeling of using premium items may be extremely wonderful, but in the same sense, being able to use something for free also gives a suitable feeling of elation.”

“What’s with that example?”

Rather, is it okay for you to proclaim yourself the representative of the teachers like that when you’re making it look like they’re treating students poorly? We’re still in front of the faculty room after all, won’t they get mad?

“In any case, by displaying the value of our club’s existence, we will be able to bring our club closer to its survival. After all, it is our proper daily activities which are important. In relation to that, this job was necessary.”

When you put it that way, I kind of get it now. ‘The Net Game Club is pretty useful, isn’t it?’ is what you’d want them to think so that they won’t think of disbanding it.

“But, for what happened today, wouldn’t it have been fine if Nekohime-san fixed it?”

“There’s also another problem with that.”

Master opened the door again and looked inside the faculty room. Nekohime-san is working on a printout.

“That Mr. Kashiwagi is one who has pretty old-fashioned way of thinking. He’s not exactly knowledgeable about electronics, but having a male lose to a female when it comes to handling machines is not something he would be pleased at since that is his understanding. Consequently, if a young woman like Ms. Saitou were to suddenly fix his problem, it would hurt his pride.”

“But wouldn’t you rather be glad that it’s a younger girl doing it for you?”

“Putting your perverted sexual inclinations aside Russian, I told you that he has that kind of thinking after all.”

“Just what sexual inclinations are you talking about—!”

Am I weird!?

But really, I think losing to something like handling machines is fine. At least, that’s what I think. I wonder if there’s an old man who would think as such too.

“For that reason, if Ms. Saitou completed that repair by herself, it will have a negative influence between the two in the future. And that is not fine at all. For this type of person, you only need to prepare an excuse that they will find easy to understand.”

An excuse, huh. In other words, an explanation that would convince them that it’s okay.

“And that was...”

“A gathering of students who are seemingly otaku, the Modern Electronics Communications Game Club, was the answer. ‘It is these students’ forte after all, that’s why they can do it. When I was young, I was more knowledgeable

about machines than the adults around me as well’ — was the explanation they needed. And once this type of person recognizes that, they are likely to use that as a support to their reasoning. And this would prove to be favorable to us.”

“Huh—, I understand.”

But asking a single person to do it when it was a request for the Net Game Club is pretty weird.

That weird favoritism is going to be pretty troublesome. Won’t it be a problem if it’s not going to be credited to our group?

“Ms. Saitou is still just new at her job so there is not much leeway for her to manage PC-related chores. It’s also not good for her to be thought of as someone who has a preference for things like games and computers. That’s where we come in and take on this task for her benefit. This is give-and-take, that sort of thing.”

“You’ve really thought a lot about this.”

I haven’t thought this much before about an errand a teacher entrusted me with. Among the major guilds in LA, it seems they’re also practicing diplomacy. I wonder if their guildmasters also think and act like this.

“Just what was it? Were you taught on the art of how to become a good emperor or something like that?”

“I think it would be more proper to refer to it as the art controlling the human heart. It’s being able to grasp the other party’s mental state while normally talking with them, and then using that knowledge to lead them to the outcome most beneficial to yourself. Doing it certainly does not elicit a good feeling, but it can be pretty convenient at times. For example, like this—”

“Ooh!?”

Just then, Master suddenly hugged my shoulders.

As I was being enveloped from behind by that slender body, I could feel something soft and bouncy being crushed behind my shoulders. Oh, this is, pretty grea... No wait. That’s wrong, that’s wrong. This is no good!

As I was about to be swallowed up by those improper emotions, I shook my

head off and immediately distanced myself from Master.

“Y, you surprised me. What’s with you suddenly?”

“I thought I would give you a little reward. If Ako-kun were the one who did that, you wouldn’t have that kind of reaction, would you Rusian?”

“Well, she’s my wife after all.”

In LA, and if I had to add another thing, in my mind as well. But I was really a bit surprised there. My heart is pounding with such tremendous vigor. I mean, look, it’s those things, just look at those things.

As I was desperately trying to avert my gaze from being drawn in to that chest in front of me, Master said.

“That just now was me measuring the distance between you and me and making Rusian aware that he is indeed faithful to Ako-kun. Doing that, Rusian’s attitude towards Ako-kun should soften up, which should relieve some of her stress. And just like this I would be a bit lonely while thinking, ‘Ah, it wasn’t bad up until now’. And that, is the intended effect of my actions.”

“That’s why I’m telling you I’m sorry for shaking you off.”

It’s not that I hated it you know. I was just really surprised.

But Ako’s stress relief huh. Was it also for that reason that she opened the student council office for Ako during lunch break, I wonder. Was making me do this chore today also something so that I can feel like I’m really in a club? If you just tell me ‘Ako’s in the student council office during lunch break’, I wouldn’t really get much meaning from that. I’d just think that she sometimes shows up there.

While she nodded as if she understood something, Master seemed to be laughing at herself.

“Does Rusian think of me as an ill-natured woman as well? To be honest, I myself am convinced that I won’t be able to make friends with this personality of mine.”

“Nope, not really. Even better— I am a bird your argument is invalid!”

I said this while in crane stance with both my hands raised up in a V pose.

*TL note: This is a reference to the ASCII art used in 2ch. It is often paired with the phrase 「わりとどうでもいい」 which literally means I don't care about that one bit. I just took my liberties here and replaced it with something from 4chan instead (Your argument is invalid). It felt like it just matched up, since the aim here was to cheer Master up. Also, the ASCII art looks like this:*



“The foundation of a net gamer is the use of their hands after all, so for the complicated stuff, we’ll just leave it to Master. If you ever need us to lend a hand, then feel free to use ours as you see fit.”

Even in the game, it was like this. ‘If we abuse this quest, we can get a lot of EXP!’ is something Master would say to gradually pull us into doing it. Such is our everyday routine.

“...Is that how it is?”

“Rather, we don’t really ponder about it too much like Master seems to think. Even Nekohime-san probably thought that you made us do that because were trying to push the load on us.”

“Ms. Saitou is not as carefree as you think. Any full-fledged member of society would put their workplace on top of their list of priorities—”

“Saitou-sensei—”

As we were talking in front of the faculty room, a single student, calling for Nekohime-san, suddenly appeared before eyes.

We were somehow able to stop our conversation before Nekohime-san came out of the faculty room. She then looked at the student as a bitter smile appeared on her face.

“You’re late aren’t you? Here, the phone that I confiscated.”

“It came back— My phone—!”

The student who just nonchalantly got her phone returned to her began rubbing it on her cheeks.

“Teach—, it’s not really cool confiscating phones so I think you really should just stop doing that.”

“Look here, if you play around with your phone during your break, then I can just pretend that I didn’t see it. But if you play something like a mobile game in class, even I’ll have no choice but to confiscate it you know?”

As Nekohime-san was lecturing the student, Master, looking as if she had proven her point, said.

“Behold! Ms. Saitou is properly carrying out her duty, is she not!”

“I guess so.”

Heee—, Nekohime-san is really doing something teacher-like. I know she’s unexpectedly got her act together, but that ‘Meow~ ☆’ image of hers is just too strong that I can’t help but feel this is out of place.

But now that I’ve seen her like this, I guess she really thinks about a lot of things through when guiding us and also when doing her job.

“But teach—, there was a sudden limited time event. If I don’t do it during class then it would be a waste missing out on it.”

“What are you even saying? It’s just a non-premium event, so isn’t it fine to just try again some other time? Just finish it during your break.”

...?

What’s this? It seems the current turn of affairs are not looking too good?

“You’re wrong teach. My party is weak so doing it during the break just doesn’t cut it.”

“Being weak or strong in event dungeons doesn’t really matter does it? Let me see that for a bit... Ah geez, what’s with this composition? Of course you’re going to run out of time doing it. Here, open this box.”

“Kaay.”

Eh, why is she scolding that person about their party composition with the

same ferocity she does as when someone gets a wrong answer in Japanese language class?

Isn't this strange? Wait, am I the strange one here?

"You see! In the meantime, doing it like this should make it much faster. Once you're used to it, the break should be enough time for you already to finish it."

"Heee—! You're pretty good at this aren't you teach? How high is your rank? I'm 130 by the way."

"It's 380."

"...Eh?"

"My rank is 380."

".....I, is that so."

As the student was clearly taken aback, Nekohime-san repeated that while showing a shit-eating grin.

"Hey Master, that student over was just weirded out at how much that teacher was into the game. Is she really considering her position at school?"

"...I'm sorry, I was wrong."

Wherever a net gamer goes, they're still a net gamer...

"Well, putting Ms. Saitou aside for now. For you and Ako-kun's sake, and for my sake as well, my club shall keep doing what we can to the scope of our abilities, for our own interest. Rusian, I'll be counting on your collaboration as well."

"If it's something I can do, sure."

"You can definitely do it. If you can just become Ako's support, then that would be fine."

"Even without you saying that, I'd still be her support."

"...That's right. Isn't that just right."

What's with that grin on your face Master. Stop it. I told you to stop. Ako is already there as my support, so it's just natural for me to be her support as

well.

And well, I know what you mean. She doesn't have any close friends in her own class, but at least she has friends in another class that she comes to visit during the break, and us going home from school together, are things that really make us really feel at ease.

"Well, I suppose I should get back soon and fawn over my wife."

"That would be a great idea."

When we went back to the student council office, Ako was silently looking out the window.

"We're back Ako. What's up? Why are you looking outside?"

"Ah no...it's that."

Ako was pointing outside the window, towards the couples sitting in the courtyard.

"If it's from here, I can easily shoot their heads off, was just what I was thinking..."

"That's banned!"

"And so there you have it, FPS is banned."

During the club activities on that day, I gave out the order on the ban on shooting games.

"This is tyranny! That was a game that even I was useful at!"

"Indeed. I was just at the point that I could start using my premium items as well."

"But it can't be helped."

Ako and Master seem dissatisfied, but it looks like Segawa's Wild Boar Plays from yesterday have burned her out.

"If Ako's sickness just gets worse then there would be no point to the club activities."

"Right? Schew really gets it."

“Muuu... It can’t be helped. Then how about we choose something more along the lines of fantasy?”

As she kept operating her mouse with clattering sounds, Master then displayed another game’s official site.

“I have a recommendation. The title is ‘Honey Story’. As you can see, it seems like a peaceful-looking game.”

*TL note: This is a reference to MapleStory.*

“This looks good. It seems like the best game to calm you down with.”

“My normie massacre plan...”

I told you to stop it already.

True to its name, Honey Story is a side-scrolling game that portrays a warm fantasy feeling.

You can move your character left and right using the arrows keys. In the early parts of the game, the important keys to remember are the attack and jump keys. It looks like you can get used to the controls pretty easily.

“Hmm, 2D huh?”

“Indeed. You can only move from side to side. Also, you can jump.”

“This doesn’t look too hard for me as well.”

It being a game easy to pick up for beginners was wonderful. Ako seemed hesitant about it at first, but when she herself said that it was easy enough to operate and saw the cute characters, her expression began to soften.

That monsters that appeared were all mushrooms and slimes, which had designs that you just couldn’t hate. Playing this game would definitely calm you down. That’s right, we’re going to go play this game and soothe Ako’s disturbed psyche.

“First of all, I’ve gathered some information prior to us playing. For now, let us go to the Honey Park next to town. There, we can find the most optimal hunting grounds for beginners.”

*TL note: Reference to Mushroom Park in MapleStory.*

Master guided us as we moved along the map. Waiting for us over there were a lot mushrooms, slimes, and players.

“Err, Master? Don’t you think it’s full of people here?”

“It’s also full of enemies so there’s no problem. We’re going to hunt here.”

“Okaaay.”

Just as we were told, we hunted mushrooms. And we hunted slimes. And we hunted mushrooms. And we hunted mushrooms. At times, a player would scowl at us and then we’d hunt mushrooms. At times, I would experience Gestaltzerfall while staring at the mushrooms and then we’d hunt mushrooms. Hunt, hunt, hunt, hunt.

*TL note: Gestaltzerfall (German for “shape decomposition”) refers to a type of visual agnosia and is a psychological phenomenon where delays in recognition are observed when a complex shape is stared at for a while as the shape seems to decompose into its constituting parts. With regards to kanji, a study has shown that delays are most significant when the characters are of the same size. When characters to recognize are of different sizes, delays are observed only when they are of different patterns. Taken straight from Wikipedia so you won’t have to.*

Err, uhh, is this all we can do in this game?

“Master, how long are we going to stay here?”

Ako, finally bored and dessicated from the anguish of what we were doing, spoke up first.

“Yeah, I’m getting a bit fed up too.”

“I’ve already gotten to level 5 as well. Isn’t it about time to switch to a different place?”

Me and Schew were mimicking what Ako just said. However, Master curiously looked at us and said, “What are you saying? We’re staying here until level 15.”

“Haaa!?”

Just how long is this going to take!?

I'm seriously fed up with this. Isn't it time to stop this mushroom hell?

"There's other hunting spots as well, but our efficiency will drop there. This is a simple game in the first place, so even with the starter gear and level, you could just go anywhere. Well then the lot of you, stop complaining and get to hunting those mushrooms. Hunt. Hunt. Go hunt some more!"

"I don't want mushrooms anymore—!"

Seriously... Are we not able to escape these mushrooms...

Our mushroom hell had just begun.

"The sun looks like a mushroom... Huh?"

It was the day after our neverending mushroom hunt.

As I was walking in the hallways toward the classroom, I spotted a familiar figure of a girl cowering in the corner. I don't even have to say it, but it was Ako.

"...What are you doing?"

"Ru, Russian..."

Ako was staring at the students going back and forth the hallway with a frightened look.

What is it? Don't tell me they were bullying you? Even I won't let that slide.

"What's the matter? If something's bothering you, I'll help. If I'm no good, I could go get Segawa as well."

"N, no. It's not that, it's..."

She directed her shaking finger toward the hallway.

"Those people loitering around move like they're enemies from a 2D scrolling game."

".....Ah, is that so."

What was that, I was worried for nothing.

"Please don't give me that disappointed look. It's scary, you know? Don't you think that if I don't defeat them all, I won't be able to return to the classroom!?"

I'm not going to think that. Even if I did, I wouldn't defeat them.

"Calm down Ako. Even if they were enemies, they're passive ones. They're the kind of monsters that leave you alone if you don't attack them. If you just walk along the sides, nothing will happen."

"Passive... Th, that's right."

She looks convinced by my words as she gathered up the courage to step her foot out, but a voice suddenly came from the side.

"Ah, Tamaki-san, good morning—"

"Eeeep!? G, go, goo—"

That girl who called out to Ako seemed to be her classmate. Without waiting for a reply, that classmate of hers just went on past.

"Go...od...mor...ning."

"They're not here anymore."

After Ako's repeated mumbles, she turned around and faced me.

"T, they were aggressive after all!"

"Calm down Ako. That wasn't an attack just now. That was just a greeting."

"Just what is the difference between the two!? What is!?"

More like just how are they even remotely similar is what I'd like to know.

Aren't you just glad that she remembered your name?

"Uuu, mushrooms are scary, mushrooms are scary."

"She's pretty much driven to the wall."

Just like that, Ako remained in her frightened state in the hallway until right before the bell rang.

"But you know, being at her wit's end just because someone called out to her... Is she going to be okay?"

As I was worrying about Ako's habits, the day passed by as usual and it's now after class.

Just like Ako, I was thinking that ‘Now that I’ve finished with cleaning duty, here comes the real thing’, as I opened the door.

“Yo—”

“I was waiting for you, Rusian!”

It was Ako’s energetic voice, which took a 180 degree turn from earlier. She was waiting inside the room.

“...What’s with that outfit?”

This is, a pretty amazing sight to behold.

On the upper half of her body, she wore a top, only scantily covering her body, which showed her navel. To go with that, there’s also the slightly problematic short skirt with knee high socks. There’s also furball-like things attached here and there, but that does not style up with this kind of exposure. Is this a swimsuit or something?

“How is it Rusian?”

As Ako happily posed, she brought out a bow that looked like no thought went into its functionality. She then swayed that fluffy tail of hers.

I heard a weird sound effect that sounded like, ‘Jajajaja—n jajaja—n’.

*TL note: This sound is the first part in Quest Complete fanfare in Monster Hunter ( <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cdlxy2L456g> ) for reference.*

“Err...Just what are you doing? In a sexy outfit like that even.”

“Does it make you excited after all?”

Rather, how about you show me a male that wouldn’t be excited if a classmate suddenly comes out and decides to show you her swimsuit (?).

“Aren’t you a bit late?”

“Hey Segawa, hurry and tell Ako that—”

I turned my gaze and Segawa was there. It looked like she was wearing some kind of scale armor with a sword at her side as she was donning a shit-eating grin. It was such a good expression. It was so good that it was irritating.

“Just what are you doing as well...?”

“How’s this? Cool isn’t it?”

“Well, I guess it’s kinda cool.”

“Right!”

Compared to Ako, this didn’t have too much exposure. More than aiming to be cute, this aimed to look cool. I kind of understand what she’s going for here.

Segawa lifted the sword in high spirits and proceeded to grandly set it up above her. At the same time she was about to complete her pose, the greatsword hit the ceiling and broke with a snap, giving off a dull sound.

“Ah.”

“Oh.”

The sword snapped right in the middle. It seemed like the ceiling didn’t have any scratches. Thankfully, it wasn’t that well-made. That was close, that was close.

“M, my brilliant blade the Hanagatsuo!”

That name kind of sounds delicious. It even smells delicious too.

*TL note: Hanagatsuo sounds like Hanakatsuo (*  
*<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Katsuobushi> )*

“And so there you have it. This is what we will be doing today.”

Master came up from behind the PC. With those white fluffy things on her skirt, she was also holding a sword with both of her hands. Even if you tell me it’s ‘this’, I’m not going to have any idea. Cosplaying like that as if it were perfectly natural, just what the heck is this?

“Due to yesterday’s Honey Story, I thought that everyone might have had a trauma of hunting instilled in their minds. So, for us to have fun in hunting today, I have come up with this plan.”

“Why do you show such concern for such useless things... Just who is going to benefit from this?”

“Rusian, who gets to see Ako in that, benefits from this.”

“Ugh.”

“...?”

Ako, who was playing around with her bow, noticed my gaze and went to shake around her bow even more. That chest, those hips, those armpits, that bellybutton— Man, I’m going to see everything that’s why you shouldn’t be moving around so much like that!

“What are you looking at with those pervy eyes?”

“It’s not my fault!”

I’m going to stick with my guns for this one! That’s really not my fault after all!

“Here, there’s something for Rusian too.”

Master said that as she brought out a set of cat-ears with a matching outfit.

“I’m definitely not going to wear that.”

“Eeh, dress up with us too Rusian! Even if Rusian wears cat-ears, I’m confident that I can still love you!”

I could go without you telling me that you’ll still love me with cat-ears on though.

“That’s fine. Well then, let’s get started on today’s club activities. —Let’s get going on one hunt!”

“Yeah!”

“I told you I’m not fine with it...”

It looks like we’re going hunting today.

“This game, Dragon Hunter Frontier Online, is what you would consider a MOACT. It’s a Multiplayer Online ACTION game with a small amount of players in each instance. It’s a popular game where you can have fun hunting dragons.”

*TL note: Reference to Monster Hunter Frontier Online.*

“Mmm, so tasty!”

*TL note: MMM SO TASTY ( <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hVHigvYeoYw> )*

Ako couldn't contain herself as she suddenly blurted that out.

"Oh I've heard about that but I haven't really tried it yet."

I turned my gaze away from Ako's excessively voluptuous skin. I really wish you would stop sitting beside me with those kind of clothes on.

"To start with, we should each pick our own weapon. There are weapons inside of that box so just take whichever one you'd like."

Rustling sounds could be heard as we were rummaging through the weapon box. It looks like there's all kinds of beginner weapons in it.

"I'd like to go with something with a big shield after all. I'm going with this lance."

"I'd like something that can attack from far away quickly and easily."

"If there's a huge sword then that's good enough for me... Ah, what's with this extra long sword! It's neat!"

We've decided on each of our weapons.

I picked the large lance. Ako got the bow, Segawa the large longsword, and Master picked what seems to be a large instrument.

—Just what is this sensation? I have a really bad feeling about this.

"Well then, let's accept the quest and depart!"

"Yeah!"

Everyone got on the boat and set sail for the hunt location. The boat swayed and shook as it moved further into the sea.

Are we going to be okay with this setup?

"A large dragon won't appear from the start so relax. Only moderately sized ones appear in the beginning."

"I guess that's fine..."

As we arrived at the jungle, we were greeted with beautiful graphics laid out before us. Even while just walking around, there's a lot of great scenery here and there. However, somewhere over there were animals walking around, so

we were walking cautiously.

“It’s pretty isn’t it—”

“If you actually go here in reality, it’s full of bugs.”

Schwein shrugged at Ako, who was in delight.

“What’s with that skeptical view...”

“Reality aside, this game is actually full of those insects.”

Master matter-of-factly said that.

“Eh, there are bugs even though it’s a game? —Hyaaaaa!?”

“Schew just got stung by a large bee!”

“I, I’m paralyzed!”

The large bee buzzed as it flew around, aiming for us. If you get stung by it, you get paralyzed and become unable to move.

“Ako, shoot down that bee!”

“I can’t hit it!”

Even though she was an excellent sniper, it looks like she didn’t know how to handle a bow. The arrows whizzed as they passed by the bee. And then, it hits me. And it keeps hitting, and hitting, and hitting me. I can’t move. I can’t move!

“It’s heading this way, it’s coming!”

“Hey, wait, stop firing your bow repeatedly! My Russian keeps going ‘oh, oh, oh’ and keeps flinching because of that!”

“Come on, you can do it. You can do it.”

“Stop playing your instrument and help us out Master—!”

“I can’t remove the paralysis—!”

As we we’re moving about in our confusion, the four of us progressed through the jungle. The screen then changed to that of a beach and a movie began to play. A giant chicken let out a high-pitched shrill as it appeared.

“Uwa, that’s huge.”

“This is our prey today. It’s the practice monster for beginners, nicknamed ‘Kokko-sensei’.”

*TL note: This is a reference to Kukku-sensei in the Monster Hunter series which is a nickname for Yian-Kut ku. It earned its nickname in Japan for being the first monster that taught people that they needed to learn how to actually play the game properly (stocking up properly on items, actually evading and watching out for mechanics), to which clearing it would be the rite of passage for those people aiming to do harder content. Needless to say, this is not actually a monster to be hunted by beginners. It is supposed to ease you into higher level gameplay after you’ve actually learned basic controls.*

“My tummy is getting hungry just looking at it.”

“Should we go we fry it and eat it up?”

“Alright, leave the preparation of the meat to me!”

Schwein dove right in. Following her from behind, I caught up while carrying around my shield with me.

“Take that! And that! Haha! What’s with this thing? It’s so slow! I can cut all I want!”

“Alright, then me too—”

The moment I drew my lance, Schwein’s longsword hit Rusian’s— my back and energetically cut it up. There’s no friendly fire in this game so it didn’t do any damage, but you would still be shaken by the attack and flinch. Just like that, Schwein kept going with the flow, and kept slicing both me and Kokko-sensei up.

“Wait Schwein, you’re hitting me too! I can’t move!”

“I’m going to defeat it so just leave it to me!”

“Hey, that’s dangerous! Wait, why am I desperately guarding my ally’s attacks instead of the enemies!”

*TL note: This is a staple occurrence when people bunch up together at a single part of a monster in Monster Hunter. Since the longsword reach is really long, anyone near that radius ends up getting stunlocked by their own teammates.*

*This is especially awful for weapons with shields as you consume stamina guarding your own ally's attacks. This was also the case with Ako's arrows earlier.*

"Take that! And this!"

Ako was repeatedly firing limp arrows from far away. Are those even doing damage?

But it looks like Kokko-sensei found those attacks annoying, as it turned around and swung its tail at us, blowing us away. It then vigorously made a break towards Ako's direction.

"Ako, dodge!"

"Do, dodge... It's going in the direction I dodged to!"

With a large 'Bam!', Ako was hit by its strong charge and fell flat on the ground. That body of hers was carried off by a group of cats, purring as they did.

"We've just lost a precious ally... I'm going to fight for Ako's share too!"

"Agreed, leave this to me. I'll use my instrument to buff us up with a song that should make up for the lost member!"

Master hit Kokko-sensei with her instrument as she kept blowing into the horn, making 'doot, doot' sounds.

"What's with that? Playing your instrument while fighting!"

"So the instrument was that kind of weapon..."

"Nothing is impossible for the horn! ...Hm, it looks like Kokko-sensei is mad."

It seems that it got angrier from those severe attacks, as Kokko-sensei's comb ignited up and turned red.

With a 'Gyoon!', it roared. With flames spewing out from Kokko-sensei's mouth, it suddenly charged at us.

"Crap, dodge!"

Schew deftly evaded as she swung her longsword down. That swing then proceeded to perfectly hit me.

“He, hey!”

I was flinched right as Kokko-sensei was about to get into my face. There wasn't even any time to hold up my shield. My screen was now covered with the image of a large chicken.

The cats then carried me off, meowing as they went.

And after a few battles, we've yet to come up with a solution on how to defeat Kokko-sensei.

If we surround it, it's going to blow us away with its spinning tail attack. If we stay at a distance, it's going to charge at us and breathe fire. If we fight it carefully, we'll barely deal any damage and it would just run off to recover. Just how do we even beat this thing?

“There's really no winning this one.”

“Kokko-sensei is just too strong.”

“I'm finally getting used to the game!”

Having two deaths in one run is not what you'd call someone who's used to the game, Ako.

*TL note: The quests in Monster Hunter automatically fail after a total of 3 party members fainting (you can faint twice and that would count as two).*

‘Mumumu’, Master muttered this as she nodded in agreement to our plight.

“Was is too hard for beginners I wonder... Now then, I suppose it's time to bring out my main character.”

“Master, have you played this game before?”

“I played it solo for a bit. I wasn't able to make any friends so I stopped playing, but I should have some decent weapons here and there.”

Her reason for quitting aside, that's something we could count on.

Master disappeared for a bit. And when she came back, she was all dressed up in excessively tough-looking equipment while carrying a neat-looking gun. This is Master's main character.

“Then, let us go. I'll show you how to really hunt this time.”

“Yeah!”

We accepted the quest for Kokko-sensei again.

Going through the swaying of the boat, we arrived again at the jungle. We picked up our supplies, and got ourselves ready— Somehow it looks like a fifth hunter who wasn't supposed to be here suddenly appeared, and in really tough-looking equipment too.

“Huh, who's this?”

“Don't mind it. That's my assistant.”

“A, assistant...?”

‘What the heck is that?’, Schew tilted her head in confusion.

“This is a really wonderful game. If you pay premium, a very powerful legendary hunter would come to assist you.”

“How strong is it?”

“Using the one we just fought, Kokko-sensei, as basis, he could probably deal with ten of them at the same time.”

Just what the heck is that. Are you denying all that effort we made with just that one sentence?

“There's an NPC that can do a task that four people would have difficulty in dealing with...?”

“That's definitely weird isn't it?”

“We'll speak of this later. Kokko-sensei is coming.”

With the sound of its wings flapping, Kokko-sensei descended from the sky. ‘Since it's just a chicken, would it be able to fly?’, was one of my doubts that was blown away when I saw it flying magnificently.

“Alright, I'm definitely going to make fried chicken out of you this time!”

“Yeah!”

“Well then... Commence the attack!”

Right after saying that, a bright light came flying out of her weapon as it let

out a thunderous roar. An intense amount of bullets engulfed Kokko-sensei with a ‘Zudododo!’.

The excessive impact staggered Kokko-sensei and it got knocked down. Its resounding cries could be heard as it cried out ‘koke—’.

“Fire! Fire! Fire—!”

“Err, uhh... Eh?”

She was continuously dishing out those attacks that Schwein could not figure out when it would be safe to get close.

As we stood bewildered by this spectacle, Master did not let up on her attack. It keeps continuing and just won’t stop. Now is Master’s turn, next is also Master’s turn, it’s forever Master’s turn.

*TL note: A reference to a joke used in 2ch which in itself is a reference to YuGiOh in Yugi’s fight versus Weevil on the train where he used Berserker’s Soul to keep attacking endlessly. Just see video for reference ( <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=321wCzRSySw> ). It also references Kaiba from the same source in volume 4 where he kept summoning monsters even though it was obviously Yugi’s grandpa’s turn. See the ASCII Art below as well:*



Just when it looks like Kokko-sensei was about to get up, it is knocked down again right away.

‘Zudododo!’, ‘Koke—!’, ‘Zudododo!’, ‘Koke—!’, ‘Zudododo!’, ‘Koke—!’, ‘Zudododo!’, ‘Koke—!’, ‘Zudododo!’, ‘Ko, koke...’.

‘Jajajaja—n, jajaja—n’, that fanfare resounded as Kokko-sensei slowly fell to the ground. Its comb broke off and its wings were tattered. Just like that, no traces were left of the king of the jungle that we had a hard time fighting against.

“It’s a Quest Clear.”

Strange. There’s something strange about this. Something like this shouldn’t happen.

“I want that weapon too—!”

Wait, wait. I just can’t buy this. I didn’t think we would be winning over Kokko-sensei like this.

That was like something supernatural at work. And as the effect of that something, Kokko-sensei just kind of died. That’s what it looked like.

“Master, that weapon is banned.”

“Muu... I suppose it cannot be helped.”

I guess even she found it unpleasant, as Master nodded her head in agreement.

*TL note: What Master just did was cluster spam Kokko-sensei. If you’re familiar with the recent Monster Hunter World, this is pretty much the meta for any encounter. It’s cheap but very effective.*

And then, we went out into the jungle again. The NPC this time was nowhere to be seen, so we can finally start fighting in earnest.

As we waited in that area where we fought it previously, we could hear the sound of its wings flapping yet again.

“Okay then, I’ll be getting in one attack at the start. You can continue attacking after I’m done with that.”

Master said this as it looks like this time, she picked a greatsword which was quite different from the one she had before.

“OK, I’ll show you my magnificent swordplay this time.”

“Don’t go hitting me again ok?”

“I’m going to do my best and shoot from far away!”

Ako, you should come a little bit closer. You should really stop spamming that single button to attack from far away.

And then, in front of our eager selves, Kokko-sensei was descending. I could hear someone gulping down their saliva as this happened.

“Here we go.”

Master calmly said this as she hoisted her sword overhead. ‘Ki—n’, ‘Ki—n’, just like that, I understood that she was gathering up power in her swing. And just when Kokko-sensei reached the ground— In that moment, Master swung down her greatsword. After that, were supposed to follow up on her attack and —.

‘Squash!’, a thunderous noise reverberated.

‘Ko, koke...’.

‘Jajajaja—n, jajaja—n’, that fanfare resounded as Kokko-sensei slowly fell to the ground. Its comb broke off and its wings were tattered. Just like that, no traces were left of the king of the jungle that we had a hard time fighting against.

“It’s a Quest Clear.”

“Wait a bit.”

“Just how did the battle end 0 seconds after it just started?”

In response to my protest, Master laughed with a ‘fufufu’.

*TL note: What Master did was a Charged Strike for the greatsword, it’s an attack that when fully charged, can actually destroy monsters in one hit with a good enough setup.*

“This game is wonderful. There’s so much you can do by spending money on it. You can pay to have a legendary assistant go with you, you can pay to increase your attack power, you can pay to increase your defensive power, you

can pay so that you won't be killed instantly. you can pay to increase the number of your skills. you can pay to increase your quest rewards, you can pay to increase the number of carves, and you can even pay to increase the chance of a rare item appearing!"

"Isn't that what you'd call a shitty game!"

"No matter how you look at it, it's a godly game! As long as I use this weapon, I could probably defeat three Kokko-senseis in one strike!"

"I want that weapon too—!"

"Stop wanting every single thing!"

"Hauu... I'm sorry..."

I hit Ako on the head. And then Ako, losing her balance, pulled me down with her and was now looking up at me with teary eyes. I could feel that exposed smooth skin of hers was hitting me here and there— No, I mustn't look at it. I mustn't.

"Hey now, stop being all over each other like that. If you do that with that kind of outfit on, it would definitely look improper."

"That's not what I was—"

And, completely unrelated to what just happened, the door to the room just suddenly opened.

"Just what is all this fuss about? I could hear you all the way from out...side?"

"Ah, Sensei."

For what it's worth, she's our advisor, so dropping in from time to time to check up on us was something Saitou-sensei would do. Sensei looked around the room, and turned her attention to the risque cosplay outfit.

Ah— I completely forgot. That's right. Sensei seeing this outfit would definitely be a bad thing.

As she looked at the pale me with an icy gaze, Sensei took a deep breath and let out a big sigh. She closed the door as she said this.

"Just what are you guys wearing here at school!"

“We, we’re sorry!”

“Hurry up and change this instant!”

“Eeeh?”

“It’s not ‘Eeeh?’! Come on! Nishimura-kun hurry up and get out!”

“Ye, yes!”

I ran out the room as if I were kicked out, and went to sit on the floor in the hallway.

I’m never going to hunt ever again.

“Uuu, it was so cute though...”

It took a good amount of time before Nekohime-san finished lecturing us, so just like that, our club activities ended.

As I saw Ako barefoot while changing to her shoes in the entranceway, I started to remember her outfit earlier which caused my face to get hot all of a sudden. Don’t remember it, don’t remember it. The game and reality are different— But still, why did you wear something like that in real life? I mean seriously.

“More than cute, that outfit’s what you flat out call sexy.”

“The difference between sexy and cute is paper thin, you know?”

“You’ve already ripped through that paper though.”

Don’t you wear that outfit in front of anyone but me. I’d want to keep that outfit under my secure safekeeping. It’s a waste to do so, so don’t you ever throw it away.

Just then, I noticed that my right arm was unusually light.

“...Ah, crap. That’s right, I left my bag in the clubroom.”

“Isn’t it fine? There’s always tomorrow.”

“That’s not going to fly. It’s just right over there so I’ll go get it. Wait for me a bit.”

“Okaay.”

Ako lightly waved her hand as she saw me off while I ran towards the clubroom. This feels something like she planned to wait for me to go home together, so it felt kind of good. As I was thinking that, I opened the door to the clubroom.

What I saw then was a pair of cat-ears swaying.

“.....Ha?”



“Ni, Nishimura-kun!?”

In a room with supposedly no one there was one person, Saitou-sensei—Nekohime-san, was there.

She was there, wearing the cat-ears and frilly dress that Master had brought, and was posing like a cat with both her hands upfront.

“.....Excuse me Nekohime-san, I’m sorry for disturbing you.”

“Wai...You, you got it wrong, I was just a bit interested in it, this is just studying up on the matter, trying to understand a student’s feeling, you know?”

“It’s fine, I understand. I won’t tell anyone. I’m Nekohime-san’s ally after all.”

I cast my eyes downward as I looked away. That was all about I could take.

“That kind of consideration is...Ah, wait, listen to what— Rusian, meow got it wroooooooooong!”

A sorrowful voice resounded throughout the school building, after class.

“Oh, Rusian? Was your bag not there?”

“It’s fine. That matter is already fine.”

“...?”

It was a sorrowful incident.

“So there you have it, I’m done with hunting.”

“I agree!”

“I’ll have to agree on that too.”

We all expressed our rejection for yesterday’s club activity, DragHun, in unison.

Rather, aren’t the premiums for that game way too strong?

“The overwhelming power of money is going to cause us great mental damage so our vote on the ban for that game won’t waver. This decision is made using the majority rule, which is the most well-known and undeniably

correct way to go about it.”

“This is coercion by numbers... But well, it can’t be helped. Let’s pick a game that’s more easygoing, something that doesn’t have any battles.”

As she said that, Master showed yet another game on her screen.

“Our Golf, Soiya?”

*TL note: This is a reference to Pangya Exhilarating Golf.*

“Indeed. It’s a sports game with golf as its theme. It has a well-known reputation for its cutesy avatars. If you time hitting the ball right, a lively and pleasant voice saying ‘Soyia!’ could be heard from your character.”

*TL note: As the namesake goes, hitting a perfectly aligned shot in PangYa, makes your character say Pangya! (or in the JP version, Kooh says Nice Pangya!) ( <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zp5ksMk6jik> )*

“Ah well, anything is fine.”

It looks like she wasn’t interested in the contents of the game at all, as Segawa started installing the game.

I’m not too familiar with sports games either, but for now, let’s give it a try.

“Excuse me but...”

Then, Ako boldly raised her hand.

“Isn’t this already kind of ‘out’?”

“STFU.”

*TL note: This is a reference to a 2ch ASCII Art, with the original being a guide post on how to use Urusai, Damare. It was about someone saying what seems to be facts about the new corned beef packaging while the person they’re talking to is on the bed. The person then proceeds to tell the other guy to STFU. I couldn’t figure out any local references that may suit this part so I just left it as is. See ASCII Art below:*

コンビーフの缶の形はですねえ……。  
 昔の缶詰の製造法では中に空気が残ってしまっていてコンビーフが悪くなってしまうんですよ。  
 そこで考えられたのがあの形なんです。  
 広い方から狭い方に肉を詰めると中に空気が残りにくくたくさん詰められるんですよ。  
 日本では当初丸い缶のコンビーフが売り出されたのですがもうコンビーフはあの独特な缶と  
 言うイメージが根付いてしまっていて売れなかったんですよ。  
 ちなみにこの缶の形「枕型」といましてね世界共通なんですよ。牛の食べられるど  
 この国に行ってもあの形なん  
 、日本で売ってるコンビーフの | うるさい 燃れ | のためコンビーフが日本からの /

I don't know what the heck you're talking about.

Well, if it's this game, there shouldn't be any problems arising from this. It's about sports so it might actually arouse Ako to develop a fancy for outdoors to help with her condition.

"Since it's the four of us, we can choose to do team battles or single battles. What would you like to do?"

"Well it's a rare chance, so how about we do team battles?"

"Alright, then I'll pair up with Ako. Schwein and Rusian, you're on the same team."

That was an unusual way to pair us up, but okay.

"Alright, I'm going to give it my all and win this."

"It's my first time seeing this game, but with Ako on the other team, I don't feel like I'll lose."

We each created our accounts and proceeded to gather in the lobby. Arriving in avatars just wearing a standard shirt with the completely standard non-premium look were me, Schew, Ako, and— a fashionably dressed Master.

Though we did expect this to happen, Schew cried out at the sight of Master.

"I keep telling you! Why the heck! Do you! Keep buying premium! Right at the start!? It's about time you stop wasting money on useless avatars like that!"

"What are you saying! This game's avatar and equipment mean the same thing! If you would just spend money, you could start out using a character with nearly maxed stats! It's that kind of an excellent game!"

“Uwa, she’s right. We’re all the same rank but her stats are way different.”

The way you look at it, it’s clear that Master is the only strong one here.

If you spend money, you’ll get stronger. It’s definitely a game tailored for Master.

“And that’s not all! If you roll in the Card Gacha you can get stronger! If you also roll in the Rare Gacha you can get even stronger! Paying for the assist characters will also make you stronger! And if you add paying for the consumables, you can be perfectly strong!”

“So this was that type of game too!?”

Doesn’t this game have way too many P2W elements!? That’s just not fair!

“Kuh, I wondered why you went out of your way to pick Ako in your team, but that was actually you looking to balance the fighting strength of each side huh.”

“Master, my character is barefoot so I’d like to at least have some shoes.”

“Hm, is that so. Wait a minute, I’ll buy it for you.”

“That’s about enough of your begging as well!”

*TL note: The phrase used here was クレクレ厨 which is a player that annoyingly keeps begging for stuff (in net games at least). This also extends to other mediums where people beg for sauce, and that’s actually the closest we have, but just doesn’t fit in this context.*

Are you planning on wrecking the power balance even further!?

“In the meantime, I’ll explain the rules simply. This game has the feel of a rhythm game, where you time your button presses right to swing your club to play golf. It’s a normal sports game. It’s a game about golf, so it uses the official rules of actual golf. You hit the ball with the club, and the person who gets the ball in the cup with the lesser amount of swings taken wins. That’s about it.”

“I kind of knew that already.”

“So basically all you have to do is get the ball in the hole right?”

‘Umu’, Master nodded. Master then continued.

“There are different types of clubs available, each designed for a particular

course. There's the fairway, where the grass is cut low so that you can hit the ball easily. There's also the rough, where the area is grassier, thus, making it harder to hit the ball. When you get to the sand pits, it's extremely hard to hit the ball. This is also called the bunker. Then there's the area around the cup, which is called the green. Those are the different parts of it— but, you don't really have to mind them all that much. Aside from the green, you can generally use any club you want in the other parts of the course. To put it in an extreme way, you won't need any club other than the 1W, 6I and Putter. It's a game that lets you hit the ball with a baseball bat when it gets buried so deep in the sand that you can't see it at all anymore."

*TL note: 1W, 6I refer to a specific denotation of wood and iron clubs respectively.*

What kind of game is that? At the very least, that's not the game of golf that I know. What I had in mind was more like the image of gentlemen earnestly playing somewhere in the mountains.

"Ah, make sure you watch out for the volcano and the battleship's main cannon. You can't hit a ball that's been annihilated after all."

*TL note: Reference to the Deep Inferno and Silvia Cannon stages in Pangya. The volcano is self explanatory, but you had to watch out for the main cannon in Silvia Cannon because it's actually a wind-altering cannon.*

"Err, this is a sports game right?"

"That's what I suppose."

Is what Master said as it looked like she believed it to a certain extent.

Anyway, let's get started with the match.

Me & Schwein VS Master & Ako's 'Our Golf, Soiya' match has begun.

"Well then, the first shot goes to me!"

"Go get 'em Schew! Show that wallet warrior what we're capable of!"

"Leave it to me! To start with, err... what the heck is this. This is an awful course."

Schew said that with a sour look. Yeah, it's definitely an awful course.

Using the starter set of clubs, if you're able to perfectly hit it at full power, it would land in a place that would make it easy to hit it again. But just be a slight bit off, and you'll land in either the sandy or grassy areas. If you hit it with a weaker shot, it would be less risky, but that would be a disadvantage for the next shot.

"I'll leave the decision on how to tackle this to you. Just do it however you want."

In response to my words, Schew gave me a strong nod.

"To put it simply, I just have to match the timing right. I'll show you my rhythm game sense that's been honed by the item crafting mini-games in LA! Soiyaaaaaaaaaaaaa!"

The gauge that was used to determine the power of the shot started moving as it gave off a 'Piko—n, Piko—n' sound. Though the gauge was moving at a fairly high speed, Schew magnificently matched the timing of when to press it. Schew's character hit the ball with perfect form.

"Alright!"

'Soiya—!'

A cute sounding voice calling out Soiya just came out from the game.

"Nice Soiya, Schew!"

"Nice Soiya!"

"That was a nice Soiya~!"

"...This sounds like some kind of shady ritual."

It seems Schew was weirded out from overflowing Soiya calls.

The ball then beautifully landed in its intended spot. Looking ahead, this would be the most ideal spot.

"What should I do? This game feels kind of fun."

"This might be unexpectedly suited for Schew."

"Next is my turn."

While giving a sidelong glance at us, who were all fired up, Master was extremely composed as she took hold of her club.

Wait a minute. That club is clearly different from the rest of ours. That thing was definitely in the shape of something you could use to kill someone. More than a club, isn't that thing a weapon? That's a large sword isn't it? Can you even hit it with that? You won't cut it up but just hit it instead?

*TL note: The Blessed Mithril Swords Club Set in PangYa. It really had sword clubs.*

"Here I go then. Where would you like me to hit it to, Ako?"

"For now, somewhere near the goal would be fine."

"Affirmative. Well then, here goes."

As she said that, Master aimed at the same direction as our ball. What was then shown on the screen was that the batted ball dropped at a point much farther than ours.

"Well, even though I've failed, at least it wouldn't go into the bunker. It would fly right over it after all."

"What the heck is that? That's cheating!"

"This is unfair!"

"But of course. There's no way it would be fair after I've already spent on it, no?"

That reasoning is sound but I'm not going to buy it.

Are all the people playing this game still continuing on despite these circumstances?

"I didn't get a Soiya. However, I've gone past Schew's ball and am now close to the green."

"You dare make light of my Soiya... Hey Russian, don't you dare lose, you hear?"

"The next one up is Ako right? This is going to be easy."

Adjust the direction of the shot, pick the club that can net the most distance,

and do a full power shot. This should make it.

“Here I go, here comes the Soiya— not.”

“It even fell pretty far off, to add.”

“Ah, that’s true.”

The ball fell considerably far from the cup I was aiming for. I wonder why. I even aimed for it properly.

“This is not a game where the ball would go in a set direction just because you aim it there. The slope of where you’re hitting it at, and the current wind conditions are both factors that greatly affect this. It’s a golf game that requires a lot of knowledge.”

“Kuh, so it wasn’t just about the premium after all...”

“Ha! Ha! Ha! You took this game too lightly Russian. Well then Ako, hit the ball exactly as I command you. Let’s show Russian your cool side.”

“Yep!”

Ako aimed directly toward the cup. The place she was aiming for was just right over there, but strangely enough, she picked a club that’s used for long distances. And then with a ‘Gyui—n’ sound effect, Ako was surrounded with a strange red aura.

“Do it, it’s time for the Finishing Shot!”

“Yes!”

To add, the power gauge was moving much slower than it was for us. Just what item did Master use!?

“Soiya—!”

Going along with her fighting spirit, Ako fired off a magnificent shot.

The ball flew off with an amazing force.

“But isn’t that just going to make the ball fly all the way out of bounds?”

“Fu, fu, fu. Do you think so?”

Right after Master’s unfitting laughter at the situation, the ball passed directly

over the cup— and with a ‘Suton!’, it fell directly downwards.

“Haa!?”

“And here comes the backspin! Alright, and then the chip in!”

“I did it—!”

Master and Ako both yelled out ‘Yay!’ as they gave each other a high five.

*TL note: Pangya has special shots you can perform by pressing arrow keys after you’ve selected your shot’s power. What Ako probably did here was a Spike + Back Power Spin. You can also use items to help with adding stats to your shot, which was probably what the red aura was for. I’m not sure about the vacuum beam though, it’s been over a decade since I last played PangYa and I couldn’t find any info on this. It could just be made up as well.*

Wait, wait. What was that just now? Strange. That was definitely strange! That sort of thing is just not going to fly with me!

“A beam just hit it. A beam came out from the cup which sucked the ball right into the hole. Even getting a hole in one with this would be easy.”

“What the heck is that? Just where did the laws of physics go off to?”

“This game is Soiya!”

Is the explanation over with just that one statement!? Darn it! I’m not going to buy that!

Me and Schew still challenged them against all odds, but in the end, Ako missing her Soiya a few times and us winning just did not happen.

“Sleepy... I think I’ll sleep in the clubroom.”

It was the next day, after class. I rubbed my sleepy eyes and sluggishly headed toward the clubroom.

Just then, I ran into Ako, who was also heading to the clubroom.

“Oh, Ako. You look lively.”

“Rusian... looks kind of sleepy. What happened?”

“I’m going to pulverize you in today’s Soiya.”

“So you were doing self-training!?”

It was harder than it looked, so I got a bit into it and before I noticed, it was already late. It was pretty fun after all, really.

As we were talking while walking toward the clubroom, there was a garbage bag rolling around in the nearby corridor.

“That’s bad manners. The garbage can is just there you know.”

“Ah, me! Me! I’ll do it!”

“...Do what exactly?”

For some reason, Ako was energetically raising her hand. She ran up to the garbage bag and then took a large swing afterwards.

“Soiya—!”

“Eeeeh.”

The garbage she just threw at full force magnificently passed over its intended destination and hit the wall which caused it to fall to the ground around it.

“...Eh? The beam is not sucking it in?”

“First of all, clean that up first.”

“O, okay.”

“The laws of physics in Ako’s brain might turn into Soiya so it’s banned.”

“So even Soiya is no good huh.”

I didn’t think it would be no good either. But if we leave it like this, she might apply the idea of Soiya onto everything and that would be definitely trouble.

“Then what are we going to do today?”

“Let’s see. How about a fighting game?”

“I can already see this one failing.”

I’m already thankful to god that those normies are given a taste of a ‘cancel into an ultra combo’.

*TL note: Reference to Street Fighter’s player, Umehara, or better known in the*

*west as Daigo. In Japanese media, he's referred to as the god of 2D fighting games. Just look up Daigo and you'll see why (Evo Moment 37). According to nicopedia, the phrase 'Thank you god!' (referring to Daigo) originated from this video ( <https://www.nicovideo.jp/watch/sm177144> ). As you can see that throughout the whole thing, he finished every match with an ultra combo while the caster was going nuts and yelling out that phrase by the end.*

“What about versus puzzle games? I'm pretty good at those.”

“Don't you feel like she's going to linking up people like the puzzles to make them disappear?”

Having her start linking up those normies in fours and shouting 'Fire!' won't be funny even as a joke.

*TL note: In the original Puyo Puyo, you link up four colors of a kind together to make them disappear. The protagonist of the original series, Arle, yells out 'Fire!' on the second chain you make ( <https://youtu.be/UTCCzQqjDns?t=48> )*

“Multiplayer Online games that have hunting as their main thing is dangerous. And the skill level required for RTS seems a bit too high... What do we do?”

“Alright, then we'll go with this!”

What Master displayed on the screen was 'Dokidoki Memoria Online' — It was a game that got well-known due to them performing an act of home delivery terrorism to the players who got accepted into their Closed Beta Testing.

*TL note: Reference to Tokimeki Memorial Online, an online dating sim. Home delivery terrorism also refers to a situation where the receiver, who usually orders something related to anime but doesn't want anyone knowing the contents of his package, gets it delivered to him, usually with transparent packaging, in such a way that one would immediately know what it is just by looking at it. Additional damage occurs when the product itself has a casing that describes what it is. Do remember that the parcel has the receiver's name on it. This is probably what happened to those who got shipped with the real Tokimeki Memorial Online. See said shipped DVD below:*



“Eh, we’re going to play this?”

“This would be a good influence on Ako don’t you think, Rusian? Since it’s come to this, having her experience the springtime of her youth in the game would be the best. Am I wrong?”

“Springtime of my youth, in a game, with Rusian!”

Ah, it seems like this one tugged at Ako’s heartstrings. This is not good. This is not a good turn of events.

“Come and make some heart-pounding memories with me!”

Please— Stop— It—!

“That was a harsh and painful game...”

As the date was about to change, I was finally released from the Ako’s heart-pounding hell.

The players are students in Dokidoki High, where the main thing in the game is having them experience heart-pounding events either as a pair or as a group. Players would take the role of the novel game’s protagonist and heroine at the same time, as they make their own choices to which the contents of the scenario will change accordingly. To be able to obtain a high score, one must fully understand their partner’s personality. That in itself is what makes up the game’s system but— “This game is way too embarrassing...”

I was made the subject of unbearable suffering as I watched the unending bittersweet youthful love story of ‘Rusian’, played out by me, and ‘Ako’, played out by Ako. When we were cleaning up the gym storeroom, we would suddenly get locked in. During the sports festival, we would both participate as a pair in

the three-legged race. And when Ako fell ill during the middle class, I would go and look after her— Were some of the probable events that did not happen in reality, which caused me to take great mental damage. To tell the truth, I felt like crying.

“Why is a romance game that turned online only seems to hurt the player more? Isn’t it normally the opposite? This is definitely weird.”

At the very least, in my situation, my partner was undoubtedly a girl since it was Ako. But what would the normal player do when they don’t know whether their partner is a male or a female? Are they just going to believe that ‘my partner is definitely a girl!’ and continue flirting with them in the events? When you think of just what percent of players playing Dokidoki Memoria Online are females, then isn’t it there just no chance of that happening? Aren’t these people being too brave?

“But the fact that it was actually quite interesting just makes it even more vexing.”

Like when the time I was taking tests in class, I had to make a hard decision and read into what Ako was thinking to arrive at a good scenario. That was pretty fun. Darn it, they really put their thought into making this game.

“We were definitely given a taste of what the springtime of our youth feels like. If this would help fix Ako, then all would be well...”

I held onto those feelings as I went to school.

“Good morning, Nishimura-kun.”

Uwa, it’s already starting to show effect!

Ako, who dropped by in class, said that in a refreshing manner.

Man, that really surprised me. Something has finally affected her in a good way.

If you live your life like that of a character in a game about the springtime of youth, wouldn’t you be able to make a lot of friends?

“G, good morning, Tamaki-san.”

“Yup, good morning.”

As Ako showed a smile on her face, I lost my composure.

It was that Ako that, contrary to my thoughts, seemingly wanted me to see her put her hand on her forehead on purpose.

“Ah, aah... It seems I’m having a bit of a dizzy spell. What ever should I do, Rusian? *\*peek\**”

“I’m not going to do anything.”

Don’t forcibly trigger an event by yourself. My choice here would be ‘That aside, I’m hungry.’.

“Uuu, Rusian, you meanie.”

“It’s your way of thinking that’s the problem here.”

“I guess having my real springtime of youth is just impossible right...”

We were just getting in a good mood, but you just had to go out of your way to destroy that.

As we were talking about that, a single girl went in the classroom and headed towards us.

“Good morning—, Nishimura-kun, Tamaki-san. You’re getting along well today too huh—”

“Good morning, Akiyama-san.”

I got it right, right? Segawa’s also there behind her.

And well, that Segawa just gave us a quick peek and proceeded to give out a sigh. Well, it’s just her usual bad attitude.

“Uu! G, go, go...”

Ako was trying to return the greeting, but she kept choking on her words. Rather, isn’t she kind of frightened?

“...od, morning.”

“Morning—”

She was still able to reply merrily to that Ako. Her interpersonal skill is incredible.

“Nishimura-kun, Nishimura-kun.”

Akiyama-san casually drew closer as she looked at us, and then she tilted her head a bit.

“Hey, are you not doing your club activities recently?”

“No? We’re doing it though?”

“Is that so?”

The contents of her question was a bit odd, but we’re still doing our club activities everyday.

If you look at it from an outsider’s point of view, we should have been doing nothing but our usual club activities.

“Yeah, that is so. But why would you ask that?”

“Cause recently, you’re not at the usual place.”

“Eh?”

“Ha?”

Mine and Segawa’s voice piled on top of one another.

What’s the meaning of this? Why would a classmate suddenly talk about LA?

“Na, Nanako?”

“Hey Akane, is that true?”

“Eh, wh, what are you saying?”

Segawa flashed her a vague smile in an attempt to throw her off. But to the expression, she said, “You even told me ‘My bad self will take care of you, you hear?’.”

She suddenly froze up.

“Wai, that, you, just what?”

“I’m telling you, you told me ‘This hunk will guide you.’ but I told you Nishimura Russian-kun was already okay.”

‘Right?’, she said that as she turned to me.

I don't remember that at all.

No, I actually remember. To tell you the truth, I do remember.

It would be better for me to just agree with her, but the moment I do, Segawa, who was turning to ash right in front of me would...

"Sette, san."

"Yuuup."

Akiyama-san smiled and nodded at Ako's murmur.

*TL note: It's a bit late, but it had to be at this point to avoid spoilers for those who haven't seen the anime. Sette was used by Akiyama-san as it literally means 'setting' as in, what she thinks they were all doing (playing out their different 'character settings').*

"Huh, Akiyama-san...?"

"Yup. You told me right? That when I'm in trouble, remember?"

"I didn't think it was something I said in real life though! Normally it would have been some promise I made in the game!"

I would never have thought that a classmate would've suddenly invaded us in the game!

*TL note: Nishimura uses the word 凸つて here. This is net slang too as normally it just means a convex. It just a term used for people who butt in in skype conversations, etc. I felt like invade was the only term fitting here (plus, it's unintentionally a Dark Souls reference).*

"Wh, why, why are you..."

Segawa's face got paler as Akiyama-san happily said this.

"I mean, it looked like you were doing something fun secretly so I thought that was kind of unfair. You were really into it, weren't you Akane? Saying things like 'Leave it to my bad self!'. It was so funny that I was rolling on the floor laughing."

I could hear the sound of something withering up and snapping.

Segawa's body shook violently and suddenly sank to the floor.

Ah, she broke.

“It’s over... My high school life is over...”

“Nishimura-kun was really dependable and kind in the game too. It’s really different from the impression that I get in the classroom.”

“...Well, thanks.”

It doesn’t feel like I’m being praised at all.

Just what is this strange feeling you get when a normie compliments you for your otaku trait, I wonder. ‘They’re definitely making fun of me in their thoughts’, is what I end up thinking.

“Uhm, about Russian, you shouldn’t be getting too...”

In response to Akiyama-san, who was flashing a smile at me, Ako timidly called this out.

“Ah, yeah. I understand what’s going on with you too now, Tamaki-san.”

“Eh...”

“You keep saying you’re a couple, but that’s actually in the game right? It’s not really like that at school, that’s why Nishimura-kun keeps saying ‘she’s not my girlfriend’ right?”

Akiyama-san giggled as she laughed, and then she suddenly approached me.

Eh, wait, what!? I’d freeze up when a girl suddenly approaches me like that so could you please stop it!?

“You don’t really have this kind of relationship, right?”

She grabbed my petrified arm and, as if tightly hugging it, she took control of my body.



“Please treat me well, okay Ako-chan?”

“.....”

“Wait, stop that.”

Ako’s train of thought started up again as her eyes opened wide.

I forcibly shook off Akiyama-san and distanced myself from her.

“Kya... How violent.”

“Shut up. Uhm Ako, calm down. That right now was just a joke, so don’t go stabbing anyone okay?”

I don’t think that anyone would suddenly kill someone because of cheating, but in Ako’s case, I don’t think you can just kid around like that.

That stiff figure of Ako began moving bit by bit, and her mouth began to open.

And then, a single sound was let loose.

“...Ru.”

“Ru?”

“Rusian you— cheater—! I don’t know you anymoreeeeeeeeeee!”

Ooooh!? She just screamed! Ako just screamed!

Ako, who had screamed louder than anything I had heard before, turned her heel and with great vigor, bolted out of the classroom. ‘Dodododo’, I could hear her footstep getting farther away until I could hear them no more.

“...Hold on... But well, she already left.”

‘Eh? A lover’s quarrel? A real catfight?’, were the words that could be heard all around the classroom.

“Ju, juuust kidding?”

“You’re waaaaay too late!”

Akiyama-san said that as she stuck out her tongue, but at the moment, it was all too late.

What should I do about this?





# Chapter 4: Ako-chan's Nest

*TL note: Reference to Dragon Nest.*

# Part 1

“Tamaki-san came to school in the morning, but it seems she left before first period started.”

It was after school in the Modern Electronics Communication Game Club. Saitou-sensei said the former with a troubled voice.

I see, so she really went home after that.

I had an inkling that maybe that act of hers earlier looked kind of real so I thought that she might do that.

“To add, I’ve already received a notice of her absence for tomorrow as well.”

“That girl really is good at preparing for nonsensical things isn’t she!”

That was out of my expectations!

Is she really that serious about running away from all of this? This won’t pass just as a bit of a joke anymore.

“I didn’t think she would be that upset over it...”

“More than being upset, it might be that she’s more shocked over it. Her feelings for you are stronger than you think. I would like you to at least understand that.”

“Ye, yes.”

Even Akiyama-san seemed despondent when she got briefed on the current situation.

Well that’s a given of course. If she were still all smiles at this point, even I would get mad— Actually, even now, I’m already plenty mad.

“You know, Akiyama-san. You probably wouldn’t get what I’m about to say, but hear me out.”

“Eh...”

Contrary to how I usually am, I seriously said that to Akiyama-san, who in turn, just kept silent as she turned her gaze towards me.

As I could see a genuine apologetic look on her face, my tone softened up a bit, and I began to speak.

“How should I say this? It’s kind of hard to put it. You see, for people like us, having outsiders, especially ones who clearly have higher specs than us, invade our personal space is really tough on us. It’s like when an ikemen drops by in a shop for otaku, all we could do is just click our tongue at that guy. For those without even the courage to do that, all they would do is glare at them from far away and wait for them to go away. That kind of thing really hurts us, you know.”

“I, I didn’t mean it like that that.”

Akiyama-san took her gaze off me and then spoke in a soft, gentle voice.

“At first, it just looked like Akane was acting weird so I thought I’d have a look see. She’s always saying those mean things to Nishimura-kun but actually gets along with him secretly, and she got along pretty well with Tamaki-san too, who just recently wasn’t coming to school at all. I thought to myself, ‘Ah, there must be something going on here’. But Akane didn’t really tell me anything, so I had no choice but to have a look see—”

“And it looked a bit interesting, so you just suddenly decided to mess with us a little, is how it went?”

“Y, yeah.”

“...Well, if the person in question wasn’t Ako, it wouldn’t have been this big of a deal.”

Segawa said that with a complicated look on her face.

“I see. After hearing the story, it seems Tamaki-san may have overreacted.”

Saitou-sensei said that.

That may be so. Normally, it wouldn’t even be a joke you would pay attention to. If I had to say it, if it wasn’t Ako, then they would have probably just laughed it off and let it pass. But, that person would still be pretty angry about it. Thinking about it like that, it’s not Ako’s fault at all.

But you know, that kind of thing just irritates me after all.

Being on the receiving end of a snide remark, and then thinking of it just as a light-hearted joke, only for the one on the receiving end to be the only one riled up by it, thus causing them to be weirded out is a situation I've experienced. There's definitely a lot of guys that I remember who did that.

I just can't ride along with those normies. What they say is clearly meant to mock me, but do I have to grin and bear with it because it's just a joke? Just how much joking around does one have to grin and bear with until it's enough? Is it wrong to get mad? Just why is it that when the one getting ridiculed gets angry, they turn out to be the bad guy? This makes me furious.

Then again, no matter what I say, they just wouldn't understand. That's just how different our playstyles are. Between me and them, our stances on real life and the game are completely different.

Though, just thinking about this will get me nowhere. I have to do something about it first.

"Anyway, the cause of this is all something along the lines of a misunderstanding. If I talk it out properly with Ako, this matter should resolve itself."

"So, how are you going to do that? I've been trying to call her since earlier but she just wouldn't pick up."

Of course. She's probably decided on secluding herself so she would stubbornly do just that.

"Then what are you going to do Rusian? Visit her directly at her home?"

"That's fine too but you know where Ako would escape to right?"

'It's here', is what I hinted at as I pointed toward the PC.

"She in there, probably."

When I logged on to LA, as I expected, Ako was ingame.

The only difference is that, she wasn't at the usual cafe, but rather at some farming spot. It seems that she also playing solo.

"How long has it been since Ako went off to farm on her own?"

“It should be something along the line of a few months, at the very least.”

Were you that shocked by it, Ako?

**Rusian: Ako, are you there?**

**Ako: You’re just in time, Rusian. I was just about to level up. Would you like to join me?**

So she replied. But that attitude of hers pretending like nothing was wrong is scary.

“Anyway, just explain it to her. It should be fine if you just clear up the misunderstanding.”

“I guess so.”

**Rusian: Listen to me. That thing earlier was just a misunderstanding of sorts, a sham, just something she did on random, or something like a prank of some sort.**

Ako didn’t answer.

**Rusian: I’ve talked to Akiyama-san about it, and it seems her primary reason for doing that was Segawa. She was just planning to mess with Schew when suddenly, you and I got caught up in it. This should already be obvious, but she’s not interested in me at all.**

“Yep, I’m not, not even a single bit, interested in Nishimura-kun at all.”

“...I already knew that though.”

I knew it. I knew it but, having you say it like that gets on my nerves!

I got a bit excited too when you suddenly hugged my arm, but that’s just too bad isn’t it! Damn it!

**Rusian: Just now, she tore me a new one by telling me that she was not, even a single bit, interested in me at all. I understand that you’re surprised by all this, but it’s not something you should worry about.**

**Ako: That’s a lie.**

**Rusian: There’s no way I would be lying right? What would I even get by lying to—**

**Ako: That's a lie!**

"Whoa."

That statement had such an impact that I was left speechless.

She's mad. Ako-san is seriously mad.

**Ako: To begin with, someone like me couldn't win in a fight against another female high school student who's also a normie. The real Russian was just a prize beyond my reach. It couldn't be helped.**

No, no, you got it all wrong. The real prize here would be you.

That's what I thought but Ako's next line of chat came out that I was stopped in my typing.

**Ako: I've already given up on everything. I'm going to throw away this life that doesn't have Russian in it.**

**Russian: Ha?**

Throw away your life... You, you're not thinking of—.

"I didn't think that Ako, in despair of being turned down by Russian would..."

"No, no, there's no way that's the case! It's not like I turned her down!"

"M, Make haste and get a car ready to get to Ako's—"

"Wait, I'll go call their home."

As we were at our wit's end, Ako's next line of chat appeared.

**Ako: I'm going to level to the max and reincarnate. I'm betting everything on the next life!**

She just spouted out some nonsensical thing!

Level? You're going to raise your level? So when you said reincarnate, you meant that system in the game where if you hit max level, you could transfer over abilities to a new character you'll make, that kind of thing!?

"It was just a for a quick 5 seconds, but I was really going pale there..."

"That goes for me too..."

“...Cancel that thing about the car.”

Master just said something to her cellphone. It looks like she really called for a car. Nekohime-san had already sunk to the floor. Really, give us a break will you?

**Rusian: Ah—, Err... Just what are you saying...**

It seems that Ako didn't pay any heed to us, who dejectedly went limp, as she energetically said.

**Ako: What, you say? Isn't it obvious? I'm going to level up, buy a new character card, design my cute, bright, and popular self and be reborn! I'm going to aim for my ideal life in the next life. Until then, I'm going to enjoy LA to my heart's content!**

*TL note: The part about reincarnating at max level is definitely taken from Ragnarok Online. However, buying character cards to 'rebirth' is another system taken from Mabinogi back when rebirthing required payment.*

No, no, the next life is just out of the question. And actually, that's not aiming for the next life, that's just throwing your life away.

In other words, it would mean the end of your normal life.

**Ako: Rusian, would you like to join me as well?**

“There's the invitation to an unorthodox lover's suicide.”

“I don't want to die as well. That aside, when Ako said she was going to throw her life away, she really meant she has given up on real life huh...”

That's pretty troublesome in and of itself. If Ako disappears, that lovely flower in my life would disappear as well.

What's more, when a friend, who was in so much despair that they would think of throwing of their life, actually does it, you would feel a sense of helplessness. It's difficult.

**Ako: I mean, please think about it. Your own self in your next life. That self would be someone cool, smart, good at sports, would have a talent for music, would have good aesthetic sense, and would do everything positively, and you could also be born into a rich family too! How does that sound!?**

“.....Living your ideal life in the next life huh.”

**Rusian: It would be a bit wonderful if that could happen.**

**Ako: Right!?**

“Why are you getting brainwashed by her! Rather than being an unorthodox lover’s suicide, it’s just going to turn into a normal one!”

“Nuuuoooooooooooo, stop it! Stop it!”

My neck was being strangled by Segawa as she shook me violently. My eyes! My eyes are spinning!

“But you want to do that right! To become that new self!”

If it’s just becoming it, I would really want to become one. My ideal self that is!

“There’s no way I would want to become that kind of a superman! Actually, you wouldn’t be yourself anymore when you become like that, so what’s even the point!”

That’s the case but, I’d still like to become like that after all!

Anyone would think that, even if there was only one thing they could have. That one thing that they could be proud of about themselves.

Be it their looks, their smarts, their athletic ability, their musical talent, their great aesthetic sense, being able to press on regardless of the hardships, or even just being born into a wealthy family! I would think that it would be nice if I could have just been born with any of those!

**Ako: There you have it Rusian. My real self is going to die, and from now on, I’m thinking of playing this game more seriously.**

**Rusian: Ah, yeah.**

I shouldn’t be getting convinced by this, but going with Ako’s momentum, I unconsciously agreed.

And then, Ako continued.

**Ako: So— Rusian is a high school student right?**

**Rusian: Well of course.**

**Ako: To go to the next life, I'm going to strengthen my character.**

**Rusian: Yeah.**

**Ako: So won't you quit school?**

**Ako: I'd also like to take turns with Rusian in leveling my character, so I'll tell you my ID and password.**

No, I already know your ID though.....Err, eh?

Eh? Eh, that, eh?

"...Eh?"

"That's not what you're supposed to say here, get a hold of yourself."

"Oh, yeah."

I was swallowed up by the intensity of Ako's no-lifer like act, that I shook my head to cool myself off.

Quitting school for the sake of the game? Why would you say something, that I feel like I've heard before, like that, Ako?

**Ako: For the record, I'm going to quit school too.**

So that part is already decided!?

"Dropping out of school is definitely out of the question!"

"This is bad. That girl's considerably gone off the deep end."

"It's going to be problematic if we don't stop her here. What will you do, Rusian?"

What will I do you ask? There's no choice but to calm her down right!

**Rusian: Calm down Ako, you're worrying too much about this.**

**Ako: I am calm though. I calmly thought about it and this is what I came to.**

Then go think some more!

But the way she said all that, without hesitation, makes it seem so real, that it's frightening.

**Ako:** And so, I'm going to live in LA from now on. I don't need the real world anymore. As long as I have LA, I can go on living. It's in the world of LA that Rusian is my husband after all.

**Rusian:** You...

**Ako:** Well then, I'm going to do my best and aim for reincarnation!

**Rusian:** Hey, wait! I said wait!

S, she turned her chat off! She's even blocked whispers! Anything I say now is not going to show on her screen anymore!

"This is bad, Ako just broke."

"This is... very troublesome."

"Erm, is this by any chance, my fault?"

Akiyama-san's expression twitched as she said that. It yours— and my fault as well. I don't even have to say it.

"Would having all of us barge in her house like this be okay?"

"Won't that just make her even more unnecessarily stubborn?"

"I guess so..."

"For the moment, let's give her some time. If we give Tamaki-san some time, I'm sure she would cool off and who knows? She might secretly come back to school again."

Saitou-sensei was being teacher-like and summed up the conversation.

"If that would happen then that would be the end of all this needless anxiety..."

As we looked at one another with uncertainty, we gave out a sigh.

Just like that, we were sent home.

But to be honest, going to sleep and waking up the next day to find Ako back to her old self, is an idea that no one even thought about.

The next day, Ako didn't come to school.

In exchange, it seems she has increased her level by one.

“This is an abnormal situation. That girl raising her level on her own is just impossible.”

“That’s right. The severity of the issue at hand could be seen through that alone.”

“...To be honest, I also have the same opinion.”

Since this an event without a precedent, you could say that she has really ran off to LA. I think the current situation is just that serious, however stupid that may sound.

“We should be talking Ako-kun out of it, but she has blocked any incoming messages from us.”

“Then how about creating a new character and talking to her?”

“There’s also the option of talking to her directly. But... I’d like to wait until Ako has calmed down a bit more.”

“This is rare. You’re not going to rush to Ako’s side at this moment? Normally, you would’ve already gone.”

“Well, you know.”

We’re talking about an Ako that’s been swallowed up by the current situation. For these kinds of dangerous cases, we should be properly planning out what to do first. That’s just how much responsibility I feel for this. And even I sympathize with some of the worries that Ako is experiencing.

And also, honestly, towards Ako, I really—

“Sorry to say, but that’s just not going to fly.”

“Sensei?”

Saitou-sensei lightly placed her hand on my shoulder as she said this.

“It’s about this club you see. Because of the improvement of Tamaki-san’s condition— or rather, it’s because she would go to school for the time being, that the club is holding up. But if this keeps up, people might say that it turns out that was just our imagination and it actually had the opposite effect instead. In the worst case scenario, the place that Tamaki-san could return to,

would disappear.”

“That’s a problem...”

So we couldn’t put this off any longer huh? But taking that differently, doesn’t that mean we don’t have to worry about Ako dropping out from school anymore?

“Dropping out... Ah, Sensei, what about Ako’s dropping out of school?”

Saitou-sensei was not Ako’s adviser, so she might not have heard it, but I might as well ask.

“Hmm—, how should I put this. It seems there was a phone call from a female that named herself Tamaki-san that hinted at her dropping out.”

“Whaaat!?”

I was startled.

Did you really just give them a notice of your withdrawal, Ako!?

“I was the one who answered that phone call but I just kind of went, ‘Ah? Yes. Alright’, since I was pretty exhausted at the time. I couldn’t remember the contents of the conversation. It was probably lagging, don’t you think?”

“I don’t think the school phone would have something like lag...”

So the one who ended that conversation was Sensei.

“Is that going to be okay?”

“There’s no way it’s going to be okay. If word gets out, it would be a huge problem.”

“Right.”

Dropping out is really that big of a deal. It’s not something you can just pretend to not hear and continue on as usual.

But, Saitou-sensei only seemed a bit troubled as she shrugged her shoulders.

“But, this situation is different than if we’ve left her alone. Unlike the time she faced me with her fake cutter knife, now she’s just closing herself off, right? I think that she’s improving, in her own way.”

“I guess so. Recently, she’s been working hard in what she could do.”

“You see? And so, I think that some boy who understands it all ought to be able to take care of it.”

‘Right?’, she said as she smiled.

“Aren’t meow able to do something about this, Rusian? Didn’t meow say that meow didn’t marry her on a whim or just for show right?”

“I don’t know about placing that much faith in someone who’s just a student though.”

“There’s nyeow meaning to a teacher who can’t trust her students.”

“Guh... There you go saying something cool like that.”

You’re at no age to be saying things like ‘Meow ♪’ though— is quite an awkward response that would not be coming out from me.

It’s because she’s always been like this, that I got stuck with that mess of a trauma. Darn it.

“It had to be like that. Else, I would feel sorry for Rusian who fell in love in with mew.”

Saitou-sensei giggled and laughed.

What’s with feeling like I got tricked. Was it that obvious?

“I understand. Since you’re going that far, I’m definitely going to have you help me— Nekohime-san.”

## Part 2

I've finished my various preparations and was about to go home.

Right now, I have my heavy backpack on and was on the way home, but currently walking beside me was Segawa instead of Ako.

"This is the first time we've went home together like this huh?"

"I guess."

Segawa said that without even looking at me. Her profile from the side, which was being illuminated by the setting sun, seemed different than it usually was as it gave off a mature feel.

"When that whole thing about the net games was completely revealed to Nanako, I figured she wasn't the type that would spread it around but... Now that this happened, that was kind of pointless."

"Is that so?"

"Also, there were usually times where she would take Ako into consideration you know."

"Thanks... Should I be saying that?"

Or do I rather take that as an unnecessary consideration?

Because it was thanks to that that my daily routine of going home with Ako is now a thing of the past.

"But it's about Ako you see."

Just then, Segawa finally looked over here.

"I'm just thinking, you know, that there's really no need to get so serious over this."

"...Why is that?"

'Hmm', Segawa took a deep breath as she looked up at the sky.

“This is just my guess, but I don’t think Ako really believes that Nanako is taking you away from her.”

“Then?”

“It’s just that she suddenly overreacted and made such a big show of sulking. And now, it’s become a bigger deal than she expected that she just had to stick to her guns. Because of that, things are snowballing off in the wrong direction.”

“Honestly, that’s what I think too.”

And with her exasperation as the main cause, she blurted nonsensical things like, she’ll take LA seriously from now on, or that she’s betting it all on the next life.

“Right? That’s why if you would openly talk to her, she would definitely come back. I’m sure of it.”

“...Well, whatever happens, I’ll be talking to Ako anyway.”

“I’m counting on you.”

‘Yeah’, I nodded, which caused Segawa’s expression to relax a bit.

It was something that she often wouldn’t show to the ones in the classroom. It was that really relaxed expression of hers.

The times where Segawa got really mad, the times she got really flustered, and even the times she was really happy, were all things that you could only see in the clubroom.

Usually, you wouldn’t even see those things in the classroom.

With that in mind, I went to ask Segawa something.

“Hey Segawa.”

“Hm?”

“You know, you said that if your secret of playing net games got out, it would be a huge deal right?”

“That’s already happened so don’t remind me.”

“Sorry about that.”

I'm really sorry for twisting the knife in that wound. I honestly apologize.

"But well, you had all those reasons for hiding it, but why do you still continue to play it?"

"...Eh, you're asking about that?"

Segawa knit her eyebrows as she showed a terribly sour face.

Did I just touch up on a bad subject? I didn't think she hated talking about it that much.

"Ah, was it bad of me to ask that?"

"No, it's not bad... Hm, err... Hey, make sure you never tell this to anyone this ok? Not Nanako, not Master, and not even Ako."

"Is it that big of a deal? But if you tell me not to, then of course I wouldn't tell them."

Segawa had this air about her that looked like she wanted to talk about it too.

A promise huh? And well, to start off that story, Segawa began talking bit by bit.

"Well you see... I'd like you to listen to this without misunderstanding anything."

"Yeah."

"When I first got my computer handed down to me, I started to wander into the world of the internet. During that time, I was just one of the common folk middle schoolers who was using it simply to rummage for videos of cats and dogs online."

Well, that's really what common folk sounds like.

Though I honestly find it strange that a female middle schooler rummaging for those videos is considered common place, but since she says so herself, I'll just leave it alone.

"It was that time you know, that I saw an advertisement. It was the one for this game."

"Ah, it's those advertisements on the side of those videos right?"

“Yeah that. And then, see... Don’t get me wrong on what I’m about to say okay?”

“I told you I won’t. So, what is it?”

I don’t think there’s anything she can say at this point that could cause any problems. Just what was it about I wonder?

Segawa repeatedly opened and closed her mouth, looking as if she had a hard time. And then, she finally went and said it.

“You see... those two guys, you see... with that fallen dragon in the background, it was that image of them with their arms over the other’s shoulder laughing. It was upon seeing that image that my maiden’s heart suddenly experienced a wonderful shock.”

“...Ha?”

Eh, what? Does that mean, that? You know, that?

“Don’t tell me you’re one of those!? Those fujoshi—”

“You’re wrong! This is why I told you to not get me wrong!”

No, no, there’s no way I’m mistaken right? That just now was clearly a declaration of your rotten self!

“I remember that image too. It’s that pair where the one with the greatsword looked a bit like Schwein and the one with the shield is like me right! It was in the official site so I know!”

“That’s right. That’s why I made my character like that.”

“Don’t tell me, that during the times we farming, you were imaging all those sorts of things!?”

“You’re wroooooooooooooooooong!”

Segawa hit my back furiously.

Owww, I get you! I get you already!

“It’s not that rosy stuff that you think! It just that the relationship between that really cool looking guy and the shield guy, you know, really gives off that feeling of a true great male friendship that it just sent shivers down my spine!”

Segawa's face was dyed completely red, but it doesn't look like she's lying.

Rather, the moment I found out that Segawa was Schwein, I knew that the only time she would lie to me was in the morning, during class. That's how much I trust her.

"...Friendship, huh?"

But even if you tell me it's about friendship, I just don't understand.

Ako then said this straight to my face, which looked puzzled.

"It's true. It's also because of... that. You haven't heard of anything like that true friendship thing between fellow girls right? And when someone from a group of girls leave their seat, the remaining members would talk about that other girl behind her back. That sort of thing happens, you know?"

Ah, I've definitely heard of that. It's that kind of story that makes you think girls are really scary.

Though, I've never actually seen them do that.

"Is that what you guys do?"

"No way! At the very least, I don't do that. And as for the others, they... rarely, don't do that."

'Ah, so they do it sometimes too' — as I was thinking that, I just gave a nod as a response without really thinking about it. Segawa seems as if she understood me as she gave me a bitter smile.

"So that happens sometimes too huh?', is what your face is telling me."

"Oh, so you know what I'm thinking?"

"Well of course. We've been hanging out together for so long after all... And actually, what I meant before was moments just like this."

"This way of talking through our thoughts you mean?"

'Yeah', she nodded.

"I really thought that the friendship between fellow girls was great, you know. So much that I thought it was enough to win against those boys that we make fun of. But. But, you see. I wasn't even able to tell Nanako about me playing net

games, even though I considered her as my best friend. It felt as if I didn't trust her enough to tell her everything."

"...Yeah."

"I wondered if she would be weirded out if I told her things like these, or if she would look down on me for having this kind of hobby and be grossed out by that. That's the kind of stuff I was thinking. It was then that I thought, not having someone hanging around just to be in the same rank as you, but rather someone who you could wholeheartedly hit, and that someone would wholeheartedly hit back in response... it's that kind of friendship between males that I found kind of nice."

"And then you went and created Schwein huh?"

"Yeah. But when I actually got to playing the game, it was actually a lot of fun, so my first reason for playing didn't end up being the only one."

Well, if you didn't find the game fun, you wouldn't be this hung up on it. You knew it would be bad if you got found out, but you just couldn't stop playing. That's how much you liked the game.

"But, that's exactly why that quarreling with you is pretty fun in its own right. No matter how unreasonable the words we say are to each other, the other would certainly have a comeback for it. You would laugh and make fun of me for acting all high and mighty, while I would go and snark at you and you would go and do the same... We would be bickering our hearts out, but at the end of it all, we would still be telling each other 'see you tomorrow'. It's that kind of thing that I'm really happy about."

"I don't dislike bickering with you too, you know."

Just behind that bad mouthed guy lies a heck of a good person. I knew that.

"If so, then I'm glad."

Segawa blushed a little as she said that. And, as if to hide that fact, she began to rub her cheeks.

A short while after the odd silence...

My partner, who had begun to open her mouth again, mentioned my wife's

name yet again.

“You know, Ako, she told me the reason why she fell in love with you.”

“Ako did?”

What are you saying all of a sudden? Is this a contest to see who could reveal the other’s most embarrassing story?

The things that Ako likes about me huh— did I ever ask her about that? I think she told me quite well about it, but there’s just too much that I can’t really remember it.

“That girl, you see, knows just how dimwitted she can be. She would space out a lot and get a lot of things wrong. She would also be slow to memorize things, and even if she did memorize it, she would soon forget it right away. It was bad enough that the people who were initially hanging out with her, gradually disappeared on her, one by one.”

“That sounds likely.”

She doesn’t have trouble remembering things she has an interest in though. She’s such a person that if you take her away from her ‘comfort zone’, she would just stand there and space out.

“But you see, when it came to you, even if you say all those things to her, you never left her side. To herself, who could only cause you trouble, you would always tell her that there would be a next time. And whenever you said that, she was sure you would always be there with her for the next time. To you, it may have just been her ingame self, but to her, it’s as if you had accepted that hopeless real self of hers that she was just so happy. In fact, she looked so happy saying that, that I thought her brain had melted.”

“I’m getting embarrassed just hearing about it.”

“It’s embarrassing for me who’s saying it too, so it’s fine.”

I don’t need you to tell me it’s fine. We’re both suffering from embarrassment right now because of that after all.

Besides, that’s just the effect of everything that’s happened so far. I just happened to show her some compassion, so she showed interest in me. And

when she approached me and talked to me, we just happened to get along. That's why she thought of wanting to play with me again.

It was through that process that we got to know each other that her being good or bad at things didn't really matter. It was a game after all.

But it was also because it's a game that some people place emphasis on how good or bad someone is.

"As for me, I happen to think that too."

"Eh?"

Segawa suddenly sped up the pace she walked, as she appeared in front of me.

What face she was making, or what manner she was picking her words, were all hidden. I could only see her twintails swaying from her small back as she said this.

"When I first met you during the offline meet, I was surprised. But more than that, I was really scared. I thought that maybe you would tell everyone how I normally treat you, which would cause them to give me the cold shoulder... I was thinking, 'Ah, is this how it's going to end?'."

"I'm not gonna do something like that."

"And you really didn't huh."

But of course. It's a given that I would be a bit offended but, you're someone that I've played and hanged out with for a long time. I already understand the difference about your facade and how you really are on the inside.

"Afterwards, for the sake of appearances, I went and said all those mean things to you, but you didn't even get mad. It was just like the time when I'm playing as Schwein."

"Even you could have been exposed that time as well, but you still decided to cover for both me and Ako, didn't you?"

That really surprised me you know. If you didn't lend me a hand there, that situation would have never settled down.

Now that you could piece everything about it together, you could say that that situation being fixed was all thanks to Segawa.

“That’s natural. I couldn’t just leave you alone in that situation you know. ... That’s right. It was just natural. So

*that* was the kind of feeling I got that time.”

“What’s up with that? That feeling you keep talking about.”

“Everything that I’ve experienced so far was just what I was looking for. It’s this whole situation where I could just hang out with you. I think that it would be nice if I could just do that forever.”

“If the circumstances allow for it... I feel like I could hang out with you for quite a long time too.”

“Like an inseparable bad company right?”

“Though the only thing going bad here is your brain.”

“I think you mean your personality.”

Segawa suddenly turned around, as she directly flashed me a smile.

My eyes narrowed a bit as the wind let out a small breeze, but as I was quite drawn into that expression, it felt like that view was already etched into the depths of my vision. This was quite the strange sensation.

“And, that inseparable bad company also includes that recluse of a girl, and that wallet warrior. So, make sure you properly bring Ako back, you hear?”

“...Yeah, leave it to me.”

“Good. Well then— I’ll be asking you to do that in place of my bad self, you dumbass.”

“You’re the dumbass here.”

As she laughed at my comeback, Schwein— Segawa, took light steps forward and distanced herself from me.

Before I realized it, Maegasaki Station was already in sight.





As I was thinking about how we've loosened out some of the tension from before, it came to my mind that Segawa somehow really trusts me.

Though, I'm sorry to disappoint, but I just don't understand what Ako's feelings on this were.

I don't know if could go along with what she's hoping for— but for now, I'll try my best.

Come tomorrow morning, I'll be burdening myself with this heavy backpack yet again.

## Part 3

“This is the place huh...”

Right in front of me was a nameplate with the word ‘Tamaki’ written out in huge characters.

I’ve come to Ako’s house early in the morning to deliver a direct attack.

Is she going to act stubborn because I came uninvited? No, no, I’m different. I’m her husband, so this should be fine.

Her address? Of course I’ve already memorized it.

These past few days, every time we try out a new game, I was the one that typed out her address during registration.

Even I would be able to memorize it after that much repetition. Ako’s the one at fault here, not me.

The Tamaki residence was an extremely normal two storey residential house. From what I could see from the outside, it looks like the garden and front porch was properly maintained. This really says a lot about the family’s disposition.

“Now then, I wonder what fate has in store for me here?”

‘It would be nice if it was Ako’ was my thought as I cautiously rang the doorbell.

‘Pinpon’, the calm tone of the doorbell resounded. My heart was pounding as I waited— but, there was no response.

I wonder why. Is she out of the house? Or... is she pretending to be out?

“...That seems likely—”

“What is?”

“Ako pretending to be out— ooooouuu!?”

Someone was there! Someone approached me this close before I even knew it!

I looked at the person in question as I let out my panicked voice. For a

moment there, I thought it was Ako that came out to see me.

But I was wrong. One look and you'll see that various parts of her are way bigger, with her hair being completely straight. She looked like an outgoing version of Ako.

To put it in a way that's easy to understand, this would be Ako when she becomes even more beautiful because she would have rid herself of her worries.

"Uhm, may I ask who you are?"

She completely looks like Ako. And, to this strangely beautiful person, I nervously answered in response.

"Err, my name is Nishimura ma'am. Today I've come to, err..."

"Ah, you're that Nishimura-kun?"

She didn't even wait for me to finish my sentence as she said that with a convinced look on her face.

'That'? What do you mean by 'that'? Just what has Ako said about me in her house?

"Well, there's no reason for us to stand around here talking. Come in, come in."

"Is that alright?"

"Of course. A friend of my daughter has come all this way to visit, so the least I could do is pour him a cup of tea."

Daughter... daughter!?

This person is Ako's mother!? It wasn't her sister!?

They look alike. It's true they look alike but!

"You're Ako's mother?"

"Ara, do I look like her sister—?"

"To be honest, yes."

Ako's mother honestly looked happy but it looked like there was also another

meaning to that as she showed a smile on her face.

“Fufufufu. If you really think that, then getting Ako would be a good bargain you know? That girl takes after me after all.”

“Ah well... I guess that’s right.”

She really takes after her, in more ways than one.

The inside of their house was enveloped in the same aura that I usually feel from Ako. Normally, I wouldn’t be able to relax at another person’s house, but I feel strangely used to this. As I got further in, I was invited to sit on the sofa, which felt really good to sit on.

But this didn’t mean that I could relax myself. It didn’t change the fact that I was still nervous.

“Have some, it’s tea. I didn’t hear out what you wanted and just made black tea, but is that okay?”

“Ah, thanks. Anything is fine.”

“Is that so? I’m glad.”

She was smiling as she said that. Ako’s mother then proceeded to sit directly across me.

“Hmm, Hee—, Haa—.”

She sounded like she was having fun observing me.

Wh, what is this? Is she going to do something to me?

“Err, Ako... Tamaki-san is...”

“Auntie here is also Tamaki-san, you know?”

Kuh, what a tough opponent. I’ll just give up and call her that.

“A— Ako-san... Did you hear anything about me from Ako-san? ”

“Nope, not much. It’s just that when that girl was all fired up cooking up a lunchbox and I asked her who it was for, I remember quite well that she said it was for her future husband.”

“Bfbff!”

T, that girl! Just because it was someone from your family, you went ahead and said something so embarrassing...

To hide my face that was gradually turning red, I took the black tea and held it to my mouth. I couldn't tell the taste at all.

"Well... then."

Just then, the air around us changed.

Ako's mother, who was laughing up until now, suddenly narrowed her eyes.

This has the same unpleasant feeling as when Ako gets mad.

"Just what business does the future husband have with that troublesome daughter of mine? Are you planning to drag her out of her room and take her with you to school?"

Only her words sounded cheerful as she kept that serious gaze, staring at me.

I, I guess from a parent's standpoint, that would be what she's hoping for huh. If that's the case, then I'm sorry, but I have terrible news for her.

From the backpack the I brought along with me, I took out the laptop that I borrowed from Master.

"Sorry, but I simply came here to play with Ako. I'm taking a day off from school too."

"...You came here to play?"

"Ye, yes."

"Even though that girl says she won't go to school?"

"Sorry... Is this no good after all?"

A normal parent would get mad here. That's a given.

But, this is just my thought on this, so hear me out for a bit here. It would be enough if you just understand.

"Hmm—... Hmm—fufufufu!"

'Hmmfu'? What the heck is that 'hmmfu'?

"Hmm, fufufufufufufu!"

“Eh, what? What’s the matter?”

Ako’s mother gave out a strange laugh. And just when I thought she about to stand and leave, she instead went around the table and sat down beside me. Just like that, she then proceeded to nudge at my side with her elbows. Uhm, it hurts. That hurts you know.

“Um, uhm? Err, Ako’s mother?”

“That’s a bit too long to say. Just mom is fine. Hey, what was your name again?”

“It’s Nishimura Hideki, but why?”

“I see. Okay, okay. Then, Hideki.”

Calling me like that as if I were her son, she then nonchalantly placed a key on the top of my palm.

“I’ll give you this.”

“Huh.”

What the heck is this. The key to their house? ...There’s no way right. The design looks too plain.

“This. It’s the key to Ako’s room.”

“Haa!?”

“You see, that girl, she locks herself in her room thinking she has the only copy of her key. There’s no way her mother wouldn’t have one too right?”

“No, no, no. What I’m wondering about is why are you entrusting that key to a total stranger?”

“I have to go to work soon, so I’m leaving that girl to you.”

“Eeeeeeh!?”

Are you sure it’s okay to leave her to me? I came here to play you know? I’m surely not one you could confidently call a positive influence on your daughter you know?

“I, is this really okay?”

“Course!”

It seems Ako’s mother was full of confidence as she said this.

“You see, when that girl’s out of my hands, you’ll be the one to look after her after all.”

“That’s... I’m not sure I can take that kind of responsibility just yet.”

“You’re honest. I like that. Well then Hideki, please take care of Ako. The key to the front gate is over there in that key case, so use that when you’re about to leave. If you want, you could take one home with you as well.”

“I’ll have to decline that offer.”

“Ara, that’s a shame.”

It seemed Ako’s mother was taking this lightly, as she grabbed her bag and walked away from me.

Work. Work, huh? Oh yeah, I remember Ako telling me about that once. That even when she went back home, no one was there— or something like that.

I saw her off as she left the living room. I could hear her saying ‘I’m off to work—’ to the second floor as she went out the front gate. In response to that, a voice saying ‘Okaaay’ could be heard. It was a conversation between mother and child. In other words, Ako was definitely in the house.

I then gulped down the black tea and left the living room.

I heard Ako’s voice earlier coming from the second floor. But I had no idea just what room it was from— as I was thinking that, a nameplate with the words ‘Ako’s Room’ came into my sight.

I calmly took a deep breath.

I raised my arm and began knocking on the door.

“Hiiii!?”

From inside the room, you could hear the voice of someone that just swallowed their own breath.

Ah, that’s right. There wasn’t supposed to be anyone else in the house, so hearing someone suddenly knock on your room would definitely surprise you.

“Ako, it’s me.”

“Eh... Ru, Rusian!?”

Hearing Ako’s voice, I could tell she was surprised with a hint of being relieved. At the very least, it seems I wasn’t an unwanted guest.

“Yo, good morning. It’s a bit sudden, but I came to visit. Let me in.”

“Yes!? T, that aside, why are you you here? What about mom!?”

“I went and received permission from your mother.”

“Mom, you dummyyyyyyy!”

The lament of Ako’s soul resounded all throughout.

“By the way, she also went ahead and entrusted you to me.”

“Mom, good jooooooooob!”

Oh, so that one is fine then?

Ah well, I didn’t come here to have a conversation with her through the door.

“There you have it. I’ve secured permission from the guardian, so I’m not going to take no for an answer and let myself in.”

“Eh, wa, please wait. Right now is a bit—”

“I told you I’m not taking no for an answer!”

As I tried to turn the knob, I figured out it was really locked. But this isn’t a problem. The matter regarding acquiring the all important key has already been resolved.

“No way. The sound of the lock is? Did mom give you the key? Ahh no, this is bad—”

The lock properly opened. I decided to ignore whatever Ako was saying and continued to open the door.

It looks unexpectedly clean, but the curtains were closed on this very room. The things that stood out were the large PC and a considerably large refrigerator for personal use that was in her room. In the corner of the room, occupying her bed were deformed versions of monsters from LA. From this, I

understood that the owner of the room, was considerably devoted to LA.

And, in the center of the room, was a single white figure. It was Ako.

I've finally come face to face with Ako's white figure— wait, white? Why is it white?

"Ah... Ah..."

Her body was positioned diagonally against where I was, as she turned only her head towards me.

It seems as if she was in a huge panic, as the only thing covering her body was her half-stripped underwear.

She was covering only the important bits of her upper body with her hands, so it made sense that her complete figure would look white. And just like most indoor types, the color of Ako's skin was, in an abnormal sense, pure white.

But, the longer I stared at it, the more the color of her skin was dyed in scarlet hue.

And then, the utterances coming from her mouth started changing from 'Ah' to 'Ki'— though, THIS IS NO TIME TO BE LOOKING AT THAT!

"S, sorry!"

As I realized that I was probably staring at a classmate's half-naked— technically naked, body as if I were licking it all over, I finally decided to leave the room then and there.

I flew straight out of the room, and closed the door shut with a bang. When I say it like this, it sounds like I was in a hurry to get out of there, but I stared at that view so much that the scenery of it is now embedded into my brain. I just saw something wonderful. That was amazing.

I could still hear my heart pounding right about now. This is bad, Ako, is amazing. I won't go into details but, she's twice more amazing than I'm even able to think of right now. Really.

"Ah, uhm, Rusian? I'd just like to check, but how did you open the lock?"

That was clearly the voice of Ako being restless. Though I had a hard time

getting my voice out, I answered.





“I received the key, from your mother.”

“Uwaaaaaaaaaaa!”

I could the sound of something falling and breaking from inside the room.

“Why! Why did you do that mom—!”

“‘Why’ you ask? I’d like to ask you the same thing! Why weren’t you wearing anything other than your underwear?”

“Rather than that, I usually don’t even wear underwear! It’s like uhm, you know, I’m the type that feels uninhibited when I’m in my room! I wasn’t planning on going out of my room today after all!”

That’s why I’m asking you, why are you stark naked!? That sort of behavior is just not acceptable for a girl of your age!

However, it seems she’s still confused so she’s not really mad yet, but this is going to be real bad later. She should at least let me off if I genuflect, but it’s all going to be useless if she doesn’t hear me out.

“Anyway, please wait a bit. I’ll get myself ready.”

“Ah, yeah. I’m really sorry.”

“No, that goes for me too... Fuuu—, Haaa—”

It seems she’s calming herself down, as I could hear the sound of her taking deep breaths.

She repeated this for quite a bit, and it seems Ako’s collected herself a bit, as she spoke up.

“Okay, come in.”

That was quick. Did she already put some clothes on?

With the resolution to genuflect the moment I enter the room, I opened the door.

In the room this time, was Ako, who was not covering her body anymore, but rather, was waiting for me in a seiza while being completely naked.

With her blushing cheeks, she was looking at me with upturned eyes—  
*BANG!*

“Why are you leaving the room!?”

“You too! What’s wrong with you!? More like, why did you take everything off!? You said you were getting ready right!?”

“I was preparing myself mentally, you know!”

“That’s not the kind of ‘ready’ I was after! Get dressed! Put some clothes on!”

After all that chaos, I was finally able to face Ako across her small table.

“I don’t think I’ve been this embarrassed other than the first time I met Rusian, but now, I’ve gone past that...”

“I really apologize, but that latter half was all your doing Ako.”

“Rusian should’ve just prepared himself and had his way with me. That way, we can put that embarrassment to shame with something even better.”

She said that, looking unsatisfied.

Right now, she was wearing a one-piece that seemed to be her house dress, but even now, my brain can’t shake off the image of bare skin that hid underneath it.

“Sorry, please don’t say anything more than that. I’m at my utmost limit here, mentally speaking.”

“Even though you have a girl right in front of you who’s fine with her being pushed down... If you keep being calm at this rate, you’re going to lose face you know?”

“It’s embarrassing so stop describing current situation into words!”

I’m still fighting off my instincts right now after all!

“We’re husband and wife, so with that in mind, Rusian preparing himself shouldn’t be that much...”

“Reality and the game are different. Seriously, please put the jokes aside for now. Please, just do that one thing for me.”

“Okaaaay.”

Why do you look so disappointed? Even I’m at the limits of my reasoning here you know.

“By the way, the reason why you didn’t lay your hand on me, was it because my charm status was not high enough after all?”

“Nope. It’s because I can’t run away from the fact that I’m an online hookup predator if I do lay a hand on you.”

“...Schew-chan wouldn’t let you hear the end of it right?”

“You see?”

Forcing your way into the home of your net game wife who has turned hikikomori and ravaging her in the process is the workings of a savage fiend.

It wouldn’t even be on the same level as betraying the trust that Schew placed on me just yesterday.

And by the way, your charm is plenty high already. It’s so high that it’s dangerous.

“Oh and one more thing. It felt like my future would be settled then and there if I did that.”

It was like the last question in a job change quest: ‘Are you truly — TRULY — sure about this? Yes / No’. It felt like that heavy of a choice.

“Not having your way with me because you don’t want to take responsibility... Is that a manly or a not manly thing?”

I don’t know. Don’t ask me.

“Also, hiding your own embarrassment and teasing me like that is not going to work you know? I’m going to find out after all.”

“Oh, you knew about it?”

Of course I did. I mean, I’m also extremely embarrassed after all.

“Ehem.”

Ako intentionally cleared out her throat as she turn her gaze to me once

again.

“So, going back to the topic, what did Rusian come here for?”

Right, right. The real problem lies just ahead.

There were just way too many events that just happened, that I was about almost about to forget why I even came here.

“First of all, I came here to tell you that there was nothing between me and Akiyama-san. I came all the way here just to tell you that so you won’t even doubt that that’s a lie.”

“I suppose, since Rusian has come this far, I can believe you.”

Alright, alright. The way that she’s honest like that is the good thing about Ako.

“Besides, you basically don’t even have to worry about that. The only girl weird enough that I can raise flags with could only be someone like Ako.”

“I suddenly find myself doubting Rusian again.”

Why would it come to be like that? Was there anything I said that sounded like a lie to you?

“There’s seriously no one else. Who else could be there?”

“It just seemed like my maiden sensor went off a bit there. It’s still within the acceptable range though.”

I don’t understand a single thing you just said. To begin with, you don’t even possess the characteristics of a maiden, do you?

“Okay then, since it seems I’ve convinced you on that point, let’s move on to the next.”

“Uuu, don’t tell me you plan for me to go to school or something...”

Ako sounds frightened as she pulled herself back while saying that.

“I’m not that much of a saint, so I won’t tell you to do something like that.”

“You won’t?”

I’m not living my life properly enough that I’m allowed to say that to others.

“I’m not. And so, the reason why I came here...”

I deliberately took out the laptop from my backpack.

Ako’s round eyes stared in wonder as I gave a small laugh.

“I’m going to spend the whole day playing with you today.”

“Are we really going to play? What about school?”

“I already let the school know, so it’s fine.”

“I don’t think it’s fine to skip school just because you already let them know in advance.”

“I could say those very words right back at you.”

“I know right—”

That’s not the reaction I was looking for. Usually, you supposed to get mad at that part. This girl, really.

But I’m going to let that one slide today, with my forgiving heart.

“I was pretty happy, you know? When you said that you would properly play LA.”

“Eh?”

“Playing for fun like a casual up until now was great, but Ako’s going to be a hardcore player now. If that’s the case, then I’m not going to hold back either! I’ll even go spartan on you!”

“E, eeh? Uhm, Rusian? Your expression looks a bit scary you know...”

“It’s fine, it’s fine.”

Ako sat at her PC’s desk and faced the monitor.

Once LA boots up, it’s the start of our Rigorous Healer Training Regimen.

“Up until now, I’ve just been letting you play as you pleased. But a healer, after all, has to watch when they use a skill to be able to combo, and they must also place importance on restraining the enemy’s movements. We’re going to be going through those things thoroughly today, so you can at least expect that much.”

“Please wait a bit! So the reason you went to visit a girl’s house was to teach her in playing a net game!?”

“I mean, what else is there to do?”

“Th, that’s... Uhm... Uuu...”

Ako fumbled for her words as she dejectedly hung her head.

“We can go out somewhere when you’re done shutting yourself in though.”

“Uu!”

Ako reacted in surprise but, I pretended not to hear that as I continued on.

“There you have it, we’re going to do this. We’re going to start with the basic controls. For the enemy... Those werewolves over there should be fine.”

I extended my hand toward Ako, who was sitting in her chair, and grabbed the mouse from her back as I place my hand on top of hers.

Ako’s small body was bent forward a little, so I could easily wrap myself around it.

“Listen up okay, this is how you do it.”

“Like this?”

“Like this, see.”

‘Tontonton’, like that, I operated the mouse and keyboard at a specific tempo.

“Like this, here...”

“And then you do this, and this, and this. Here.”

“Do this, and this, like this...”

“Ah no, no. You’re not doing it.”

Only her mouth was moving but her hand wasn’t.

You’re not going to be able to master the ‘heal’ in healer like that.

“Listen up okay? A healer has to manage the cooldowns for each of their specific recovery abilities while using the right skills at the right time to connect a combo. Moreover, you should be using your buff and debuff skills to mitigate

or cancel the enemy's huge damage dealing attacks. If you fail that, having your largest healing combo on standby should be a given. You'll be at your peak once you master those basics. If you say you want to hit the max level and aim for reincarnation, then this much is a must."

*TL note: All healer mechanics so far seem to be based on FFXI's more extensive healer setup rather than RO. The term also used for hitting max level here was レベルカスト which is short for 'Counter Stop', indicating that you've hit the max for that thing (it can be level, item count, high score, etc.).*

"Uuu, Rusian is really being spartan about this."

"Leave it to me. I'll hang out with today as much as I can."

"I already know that—! You're not going to leave me alone until I get it! It's like even though the break has just started, you're not going to wait for me to finish all of my food and get me back to doing that again!"

"It's fine. I'm going to properly wait until you finish all of your food. Come on, do it one more time. The werewolf is preparing something, it's going to use a skill—"

"Aaaah, like this, this, and this, like this, and this..."

"Your tempo is too fast. Watch your skill's cooldown so that your combo won't get interrupted. If you properly pull off your combos in sync, their timings should barely match that they would be in cooldown the next time you use them."

"L, like this, and this, and this..."

"You're using the wrong skill there—"

"This is impossible—!"

"It's over. I'm all burned out."

"Well, at least you pulled it off once."

"Just... once..."

Ako exhaustedly plopped herself on the bed.

She then rolled around to face herself up which caused the hair covering her

face to be parted left and right. I can see her expression more clearly than usual. Her cheeks were a bit relaxed as it seems she was unexpectedly in a good mood.

“Hey, Rusian, how about we take a little break? I’ll serve you some tea.”

“Ah, sorry about that.”

As I was thinking that she was about to go out of her way to serve me some tea, Ako opened the refrigerator that was in her room and,

“Here you go.”

‘Don’, she placed a plastic bottle containing tea right in front of me.

Th, that really lacked any sort of charm.

“I thought you were going to pour me some from your kitchen...”

“If we’re talking about the skills for that, I have it. But right now, I’m in hikikomori mode.”

So that’s why she went and offered me tea straight from her refrigerator. You could spend a few days just living off the calories on this thing.

“I’ve already prepared myself for times where I wouldn’t have to go out of my room for a week. Just like a mirror image of a model hikikomori right?”

“Rather, look at yourself in the mirror and start looking exactly at the things you have to reflect on. In the first place, if you’re going to be locking yourself in your room for one week, what are you going to do about other things? Like the toilet for example?”

I held the bottle of tea to my mouth as I said that. Ako then calmly replied.

“Why, of course, I use plastic bottles for those.”

“Ngagofu!?”

I choked with all my might. I think some of it even got into my windpipes. But more than that, my attention was placing a lot more attention on what Ako just said. You use plastic bottles you say? Don’t tell me, Ako was one of those legendary gaming warriors called the ‘bottlers’!?

“Y, yo, you, don’t tell me... The contents of this bottle is...!?”

“No, no, no, the thing I just served to Rusian was plain tea you know!? You could tell from the taste right!?”

I haven’t tasted ‘that’ so I wouldn’t know!

At least, it didn’t have a weird smell so I think it was fine. Don’t say something so scary!

“Though I should say, I don’t think I would have the courage to love an Ako who was a bottler.”

“N, no way! Please still love me even if I’m a bottler or a diaper user!”

“No way, no way, no way!”

Diaper users and bottlers are both equally impossible for me. Give me a break.

*TL note: The words used here were ボトラー and オムツアー*

*which both refer to ways on how to dispose waste while gaming (literally means bottler and diaper faction respectively). There was a particular linkshell in FFXI dedicated to hunting High Level Notorious Monsters that had all kinds of people with their own ways to go about this (the linkshell was referred to as HNMLS) which was probably where the author sourced it. As an added fact, the mainstream option was of course, the bottler.*

“That’s just a joke of course. I actually use the toilet properly you know.”

“Please stop with those jokes. They’re bad for my heart.”

I feel relieved from the bottom of my heart. I was thinking that it might’ve been a joke, but, having Ako say it just kind of makes me think twice if she would actually do that.

“Ah that’s right, what are you going to do about lunch? Are you just going to have your fill snacking on some sweets?”

“Ah, yep. I’ll just kind of snack on them and get it over with that way. If I wasn’t in hikikomori mode, I would be making you a meal instead though...”

“I would like to try eating your freshly cooked meal once, but there’s no real reason to hurry and ask for that right now.”

“Are you sure?”

Ako unexpectedly said that but, I smiled as I replied to her.

“There’s always another chance for such a thing. There’s really no need for you to do that right now. Let’s just play for today.”

“Rusian...”

Ako was teary-eyed as she looking at me while saying that.

“And so, I hate to say this while you’re being so emotional, but let’s continue.”

“I—don’t—wannaaaaaa—”

Tears then started overflowing from those eyes.

A ‘Pikon ♪’ sound could be heard as the notification about a guild member going online was displayed on the corner of the screen.

“Oh, it looks like Schew and Master have logged in.”

“Like this... And this... This...”

“Get a hold of yourself—”

Ako, who was swaying back and forth as she moved her hands like a machine, trembled for a bit.

“Ah... is it time for club activities already? I think I lost track of what I was doing along the way...”

“Why do you keep forgetting these things even though I’m trying my hardest to teach you?”

Wasn’t all your effort for this one day wasted then? This girl, really.

But well, that was just one of the sub-objectives so it’s fine. Today’s main objective is going to be tackled right now.

“Ako, I’m going to borrow a cable okay?”

“Okay, that’s fine.”

“Thanks. Then, I’m going to connect this here...”

I connected the cable to the laptop I borrowed from Master. It was one used especially by Master, so its spec is pretty high enough for gaming. LA runs fine on this as well. I typed in my ID and password and could now see the familiar face of 'Rusian' being displayed.

"Oh yeah Ako, stop blocking everyone in chat and return your settings to normal."

"Ah, okay, okay."

I took Ako with me and went to the usual cafe. Over there were the figures of everyone waiting.

**Schwein: Hey both of you! What the heck are you doing skipping school!**

**Rusian: We were playing together.**

**Ako: I was flirting around with Rusian.**

**Schwein: I'm seriously going to kill you.**

Schwein just said that with an amazingly huge smile on her face. For some reason, that smile seemed to overlap with Segawa's face, that it gave me the chills.

**Rusian: Seriously though, I'm sorry.**

**Apricot: Just what were the two of you doing?**

Master was just showing us a bitter smile.

And then, the last person, just shrugged her shoulders as she said.

**Nekohime: That's right. Doing something like skipping school to play games... If meow get found out, meow'll be in trouble.**

**Ako: ...Sensei.**

**Nekohime: It's nyaat Sensei, it's Nekohime-san. I'm borrowing Ako-chan's PC purr now.**

"That means it's Sensei right?"

"It's probably a matter of her pride, so don't go intentionally taking a jab at that."

It must be hard acting out the part of Nekohime-san for Sensei given her position. The thing a considerate person would do here is to just look that over.

**Nekohime: But I have to say, I didn't think meow would make this PC's password something like that.**

"Eeh? What's so bad about it?"

"There's nothing good about it."

It's because your password was 'Rusian, Ako, Love, Eternity'! I was only the one who told Sensei that but I felt like I was going to vomit up blood when I did!

**Rusian: But well, this is perfect. I have something to talk to you about, would you hear me out?**

**Nekohime: What's the meowter, Rusian?**

**Rusian: I'm going to quit school.**

It seems those words hit everyone hard as everything stopped moving.

**Schwein: Ha?**

**Apricot: Ru, Rusian?**

"Whaaat!? Rusian, have you gone crazy!?"

I ignored Ako saying that, and proceeded to type away at the keyboard.

**Rusian: Ako said she wanted to quit school, and I kind of had it with everyone call me otaku this and that, so now, I'd rather slack off and just keep playing the game.**

The words that came out may have been a bit harsh, but it was not necessarily all a lie. This in itself somewhat mirrors how I truly feel.

And then, upon seeing my chat, Nekohime-san's ears wiggled.

**Nekohime: Ah— is nyaat so?**

She kept nodding her as if she were convinced and then continued.

**Nekohime: In other words, a lot of stress—**

For some reason, she stopped her words there.

And then, she started up again.

**Nekohime: It's built up... right?**

“Uhm, Russian.....”

It seems that me and Ako were getting dragged along by this strange atmosphere. And I think Schew and the others who were in the clubroom also understood where this was going. However, with my iron will, I ignored that and patiently waited for her words to come out.

And it seems that after careful consideration, Nekohime-san said.

**Nekohime: I guess it can't be helped— Meowkay.**

**Ako: You caaaaaaaaaaaaaan't!**

“Why not? You said you were going to quit school right?”

“I did say that, but that's not it! What I said just now wasn't about that! I'm telling Nekohime-san that she can't! Saying careless statements like 'I guess it can't be helped, meowkay' just because you asked her, she'll probably regret it later in the future!”

What the heck is this girl saying? I don't get it at all.

*TL note: The reason why Nekohime typed as she did was because she was hinting at a joke that was a reference to a log in RO (*

*見抜き)*

*where a guy was asking a female character if it was okay to fap to their character. This is also the reason why Ako rejected that conversation. The original conversation also had the female character appending -nya at the end. The conversation went as follows:*

*: Excuse me I have a request*

*: What is it?*

*: **Can I please cum and look...?***

*: Cum and look?*

*: Yes.*

: Ah—

: *I understand, it's that thing right...*

: *Is it fine?*

: *Well.*

: *It's built up, right?*

: *Yes.*

: *I guess it can't be helped...*

: *Meowkay.*

“Well there you have it. We’ve already secured permission, so we can continue on being a NEET couple.”

“You can’t! What are you going to do about your parents?”

“Me, the student in question, and my homeroom teacher have already come to an agreement so it’s fine. In the worst case scenario, I’ll just hole up in your room too.”

“T, that’s okay but, that’s not fine at all!”

“Even your mother has already given me her blessings and said that it’s fine.”

“You can’t, you can’t, you can’t! Anyhow... you just can’t!”

No matter how much I tell her that, she would just stubbornly refuse. Even though Ako is usually weak against pressure, she’s unusually vehemently opposing this.

“Getting Rusian involved in this... I just can’t do that.”

“...I see.”

Even though you have the courage— no, the understanding, to bring such a thing unto yourself like that, you just don’t have the resolve to involve others in it. That’s just the kind of creatures humans are.

“Hey, Ako. Segawa... Schew told me something.”

“...Told you what?”

“That she knew Ako wasn’t really serious about the whole thing with Akiyama-san. But you just unconsciously overreacted, and stubbornly went on to sulk. Afterwards, you just couldn’t find the right timing to take back what you had just said, so you just helplessly went along with it that it’s now come to this.”

“Hauuu...”

Ako clenched at her chest as she was taken aback by what I just said.

Oh, that was a wonderful critical hit. Way to go Schew. As expected of a greatsword user.

“H, how did she know all that?”

“She said it’s because she’s been hanging out with you for quite a long time.”

‘But you know’, I said that, continuing on.

“I undoubtedly thought that was the case as well. And that’s not all.”

Hey, Ako. You know, you...

“You really don’t want to go to school right?”

“.....”

“You have trouble making friends, feel uncomfortable in class. and you don’t really understand the lessons either. You know that the situation you’re in is a tough one, but you don’t know just what to do to get out of it. You don’t have any fun outside of the club activities, so you don’t want to go. That’s what you’re really thinking right?”

“Uu, uuu.”

“Then that thing with Akiyama-san happens, things come to a head, and you popped. That’s the feeling that I got.”

“.....Uhm.”

Ako then turned to me with upturned eyes as she still kept her head down.

“Why does Rusian know even more about it than Schew-chan?”

“It’s because despite all this, I’m still your husband you know.”

“...Ehehehehe.”

“Hahahahaha.”

It seems we’ve both gone crazy as we laughed.

“Did you have fun today, Ako?”

“Yep! Tons of it!”

“I’m glad to hear that. So did I.”

Skipping school and spending an unproductive day with just us two, gave me such a feeling of immorality. I just couldn’t get enough of it. Is this the pleasure of being a truant?

“Then are you going to stop saying that you’ve given up on life and going on to the next?”

“E, even I only meant that as a joke.”

Then I’m glad. Having Ako disappear would make my real life deplorable.

“Then, do you want quit school and just spend everyday like this?”

“...Yes.”

Ako did not show any signs of rejection, and just went along with that.

“Then let’s do just that.”

“Y, you can’t...”

“I can’t?”

“...Uuu, what should I say?”

Ako was contradicting herself as she grabbed her head. I understand, I understand you. You just don’t know what the heck it is you want to do. Everyone gets like that sometimes.

“Schew also told me, that she wanted to stay with us forever. You, Master, and me too. That it would be nice if we were able to do that. It was so out of her character that she said that all the while blushing.”

“...Me too. I’d like to do that too, as much as I can.”

Just having those feelings is enough. You don't need to do anything else.

"You know, I once thought too that I didn't need anything else if I just had the game. It's like I was thinking, 'my real self is the one that was in the game'. But because of everyone— because of you, I found that my real life has unexpectedly become even more fun. That's what I'm thinking right now."

I was only doing whatever in the real world, and took only the game world seriously. I thought that that was how I was going to spend the rest of my life from then on.

But now, the reason why I am acting for the sake of the real world, even though I used to think all of those things before, was all because of Ako.

"We could keep doing club activities at school again and again. And when summer comes, let's have the followup to our offline meeting from before. During the cultural festival, we could set up a net game demo booth too. We could go on that field trip together and stay holed up in our rooms playing net games all day... There's just so many things worth looking forward to that I can't help but think that it's going to be fun."

"...But, it feels like I'm eventually going to get fed up with it midway during the cultural festival and the field trip though."

Ah—, that's seems likely. Her burning herself out in the first few hours, and then blurting out to everyone that she'd like to go home already and play net games is something that I can imagine.

But what exactly is wrong with that? It's fine to get fed up with things. It's not that big of a deal.

"That's fine. That's just how you happen to feel right now. You got tired of dealing with real life so you went to play net games. You can go ahead and play to your heart's content. And then, when you feel like you can go at it again—that time, let's go to school together again, okay? And if you tell me that skipping school with you is not allowed, then I'll just be waiting you at school instead."

"Rusian..."

Ako looked over me with teary eyes.

W, what's with you? Why are you making that face? You look like a lost child who wants to cling on to the parent that she's finally found.

Though, I do feel a bit guilty for telling her to 'go to school' in such a roundabout way.

I was getting a bit embarrassed, so I took my eyes off of Ako.

I then tried to hide that fact by just saying something.

"And you know, you said that your dream is to be a housewife right? But if we don't both graduate from school together and live independently, that's just not going to happen you know? Your future plans would be in danger."

"Eh?"

"...What with that 'eh'?"

Ako's reaction was different from what I had expected.

I thought that she would be grumbling as a reaction to what I just said, but it seems her reaction was composed of mainly a look of surprise and expectation.

Did I say anything weird? Having a blissful wedding, and creating a warm family— those things that seem like the peak of a normie's life is only obtainable because you lived your life properly right? That's why it's hard, isn't it?

As I sat there with a huge question mark on my face, Ako firmly clasped both of her hands in front of me.

"I got it... I got it! I finally got Rusian's words of promise! Rusian is going to take responsibility for my future!"

"When did I say something like that—!?"

How in the world did you arrive at that conclusion!? I'm sorry to say, but I'm not dependable enough to shoulder the burden of someone else's future you know!?

"But you said that we'll get married if we graduate from school together!"

"Isn't that a pretty extreme jump in logic right there!? All I said was that if you wanted to be able to marry someone, you should at least be able to properly go

to school!”

“Then if you take that the other way around—!”

“Don’t take it like that!”

If you take it the other way around, it’s just going to sound really convenient for your case!

“Russian, let’s have our wedding ceremony and the reception ingame okay?”

“You’re a pretty economical wife aren’t you!”

That’s not going to cost any real money at all. Financially speaking, it would be the best option.

As I was thinking about what Ako meant by that, I fiddled around with the key in my hand.

It was the key I received from Ako’s mother.

I guess Ako is thinking the same thing as her mom after all. If that’s the case, should I just go ahead and take her for myself? It’s not like I’m dissatisfied with the current Ako— though, as I was thinking that, the image of Ako’s naked body flashed in my mind.

Aah, err, uhh... so I can’t even run away to my thoughts anymore.

Meeting someone in a net game and then marrying them in real life is the path an online hookup troll would take.

But— I don’t feel the idea itself is necessarily all that bad.

“Well, it’s not like we have to think about that right now. Let’s take this slowly, okay?”

“So you’re just putting it on hold! This is a big improvement right!”

“If you’re going to say that, how about you improve yourself a little as well?”

“I guess that’s right.”

Ako was giggling and laughing as she lightly tapped on the keyboard.

The PC’s fan suddenly turned up a little, and the hard disk made whirring noises.

And then, the windows displayed on the monitor begin disappearing one by one.

“Okay then. How about we go to school right now?”

“Even if you say that now, we won’t be able to do anything but club activities.”

“Then let’s go do our club activities!”

“Now look here, Nekohime-san already told you that going to school just for club activities is not allowed.”

“...Oh that’s right.”

A lot of hardships await us before we get to the fun things. If you don’t tend to these bothersome chores in real life, you won’t be able to come back to the net game world.

And well, since I’m not Ako, I can at least say this: My real life has gotten a lot more fun thanks to the game. It’s been so much fun, that I feel like doing my best in playing and clearing it.

“How about it Ako? Do you think you can keep at it now?”

“If I do my best and get tired, Rusian is going to come and take a break with me right?”

“If it’s for the sake of my wife, then I’d do anything.”





“Then— I think I can keep at it.”

In that short moment, all sound just stopped.

The PC had its power turned off, and the monitor that was lighted up a moment ago, is now being dyed black. As the light fled from the screen, it began to reflect Ako’s face like a mirror.

“.....”

Ako’s facial expression being reflected in the screen showed a slightly distorted look— but then she suddenly smiled, as if she gave in.

I don’t exactly know what she’s thinking.

But, I’m sure it wasn’t anything bad.





Hiromi

~~~~~x~~~~~、~~~~~、~~~~~。~~~~~

And you thought there is Never a girl online?



# Epilogue: Tokimeki Fantasy?-Real

*TL note: Reference to Tokimeki Memorial*

I'm not a stalker but, I just can't help wanting to find out about things I'm curious about.

I was looking into the classroom from an inconspicuous corner in the hallway to check up on Ako.

Early morning in the classroom, you could see a lot of people loitering and wandering about. They would be hanging around with their preferred crowd, talking about their preferred topics, all the while fooling around and laughing.

In the midst of all that was Ako, who had her eyes cast downward towards her desk.

And while she was in that state, a girl called out to her.

"Ah, Tamaki-san. You were absent again yesterday weren't you? Were you not feeling well?"

"Ah, no..."

Ako raised her head up for a moment but then proceeded to hang her head again. The girl waiting for her reply seemed troubled as she tilted their head.

Involuntarily, I took a step forward. I wouldn't be able to cover for Ako as good as Segawa in this case, but leaving her here is just—.

"About that you see, listen to this—"

Just then, an amiable voice naturally joined in on the conversation.

Just when did she get here? Akiyama-san just joined in on the conversation without any hint of her being out of place even though she's from a different class. She then cheerfully tapped on Ako's shoulder.

"This girl you see, has a boyfriend in my class you know—. And when he heard that Tamaki-san was calling in sick, he went out of his way to take a leave from

school as well to nurse her back to health!”

“Eeh, no way!”

“E, eeh?”

Those who showed their surprise at Ako was not only the girl who called out to her, but also the nearby girls who heard that. They couldn’t turn their eyes away in wonder of this interesting gossip.

“I even heard that he went to her house today so they could walk to school together! Looking at it like this, it’s like we haven’t made any progress at all compared to Tamaki-san.”

“What’s that about? I haven’t heard about that!”

“Hey, hey, what kind of guy is he?”

“Ah, n, no...”

Ako could only move her eyes back and forth in surprise as the conversation continued on without her.

“I know him! It’s that guy who plays games with her that she calls by his something like his nickname! I heard it from a girl in another class!”

“Is that something like an online handle?”

It seems they were ignoring Ako, who was in the middle of it all, as they kept continuing their conversation.

“Ako!”

Just then, an elegant voice resounded from the hallway. With a majestic and confident voice that stands apart from the noise of the morning classroom chatter, Master called out to Ako.

“Splendid. It seems you properly came to school. I have an important announcement to make today so make sure you come to the club later!”

“Y, yes.”

Without paying heed to the attention she has garnered from the classroom, Master looked satisfied as she nodded.

“You too, Rusian.”

“Gotcha.”

I really wish she would stop giving us that look as if we’re both problem children. I mean, I was worried after all. As a result, I even got her to come to school with me.

But well, as everyone was looking at this sight,

“Tamaki-san, you’re friends with the president?”

“Goshouin-senpai is really cool but since she’s the daughter of a bigshot in school, everyone just keeps a distance from her right? That’s the first time I’ve seen her act chummy with anyone.”

“Master is, uhm...”

“Oooh, oooh! Master? What’s that about?”

It seems like this is going to work itself out, somehow.

As I let out a sigh of relief, Akiyama-san looked my way for a bit and smiled.

She’s really incredible. It’s like seeing one of those hardcore players in LA. Her level and skills in real life are just way different from mine. It makes me think that I can never be like that.

Though, I can’t really say that Akiyama-san’s way of showing concern is not meddlesome, so hang in there, Ako.

—And, well... As rumors about me and Ako spread like this, it’s like, as the groundwork for our relationship was being laid out, it also prevented my escape.

**Rusian got the title ‘Online Hookup Predator’!**

I felt like I just heard that sad notification going off.

“It’s finally time for club activities—”

Ako, who had exhaustedly plopped on her desk face first, let out a sigh of relief.

“You looked like you had quite a bit of fun there though.”

“With my starter level social skills, getting used to it at this time is impossible. I already knew it but... it’s really hard after all...”

Ako went ‘auu, auu’ as she was lamenting at her own helplessness.

Can she really adapt well into the class fumbling around like that?

“I only heard this from Nanako but, it seems it would be fine if you just keep the character of a female otaku that has an otaku for a boyfriend.”

“Are you really okay with that though? Won’t they find out that you’re a net game otaku too?”

“Nanako’s the one who took care of it this time so it’s fine right? That girl won’t lose face just because of that.”

“The abilities of a normie are fearsome indeed!”

I guess there are mechanics like this too.

Normally, we would be cowering in fear of the normies, but having them as allies would be reassuring.

“I wonder if she feels a sense of responsibility because she intentionally got us into that mess?”

“Mm— well there’s that, but she unexpectedly seems interested in LA too.”

Even though she just came to LA to poke fun at Segawa?

Ah, I see. So she did quite enjoy it after all. Well, that’s the natural result of having worked hard for something.

“And it was all thanks to a certain someone being gentle and caring while looking after her...”

“...Hey, Segawa. Ako just seemed like she was getting better for a bit there but don’t you think her mood’s relapsing?”

“No way that’s happening.”

As I was staring at her, Segawa then tried to change the topic as if to throw me off.

“Err, you’re fitting in pretty well with your class now aren’t you Ako?”

“I had no idea what they were saying midway, so for now, I just told them that my husband was the best.”

“So that’s why those girls were giggling and laughing at me during the break!”

So that’s why it felt like the girls were staring at me more than usual!

Ah darn it, I guess it’s fine so long as they don’t say anything like we’re having an illicit relationship.

“That aside, let’s go play! I’ll show you the power of me who has taken a step forward toward being a normie!”

“Haa... Are you really going forward though?”

“But of course! I even got invited to go to karaoke with them during dismissal!”

“Wow, that’s real normie-like.”

Even though no one has invited me to anything like that... Honestly, I’m pretty jealous.

“I calmly rejected them though! There’s no way I would be able to sing you know! They should at least be able to figure that out!”

“That’s what I thought.”

“Ah, but I can sing the theme song of LA. I bought that CD after all.”

“Though I’m sure the reason you bought it was because the collaboration item was cute...”

“That’s fine isn’t it? And Master also had that important announcement she’s going to make so I couldn’t go anyway.”

Just as she was saying that line, the door opened wide.

“Hear me out my brethren!”

Master, who just entered, spread out her hands.

“We’re embarking on a training camp!”

“...Ha?”

“We’re going to go one whole night without sleeping to further our net game

prowess! This was originally my plan to rehabilitate Ako by giving her a change of pace, but since Rusian was able to do something about that in just a day, it's all wasted! I'm depressed about this fact so I'll just have you all participate by force!"

"I'm sorry about that!"

"I'm sorry for worrying you too!"

Master was just being herself doing all these things for us. We're really sorry.

"I'm sorry to butt in while you're all fired up but..."

Following behind Master was Saitou-sensei, who put her hands to her forehead as she said this.

"There's no budget allotted for club you know? Where are you going to get your funds from?"

"I'll pay for it myself."

"...I know I'm your adviser but, do I really have to go?"

Master smiled as she said,

"If meow please would."

"T, this is just purrfect..."

It seems the matter of getting Nekohime-san onboard was already settled.

She's pretty dependable, being our advisor and all.

"A whole night... With Rusian..."

"So that's what you're focusing on?"

"We've already made a vow after all, so this time for sure, I'll be prepared."

"We haven't done that and I don't need you to be ready for that."

"Then Rusian, you better ready yourself for me."

"I won't do that."

"But a training camp is a pretty important event right? I'm sure the choices leading to the Rusian End is hidden somewhere there!"

“Even if it’s there, I won’t be picking the same choice as you.”

“Uuuuu...”

‘Mai waifu’ was looking at me all teary-eyed.

I had no idea that my online wife would turn out to be a girl like this.

If others were to compare her to the usual girl, you might feel that it’s a shame to have her but, in my point of view— yeah. I won’t dare say it.

She’s really surpassed my expectations, in both the good and bad meanings of those words.

“Hey Ako, I’ve been thinking about this...”

“Yes?”

I rest my hand on Ako’s head.

“Real-life Offline seems to be a better game than we thought, huh?”

“I guess so.”

Ako smiled wholeheartedly as she gladly agreed to that statement.

The artificial light of the monitor then shined on us, as if enveloping all that we are.

# Afterword

## Sorry for the shout.

*TL note: This is a manner of how people start talking in World Chat in the online FF games (11, and now, 14). Not really everyone does it but they pass it off as sort of a joke.*

It has been a while. But if this is not the case for you, then it's a pleasure to meet you.

This is Kineko Shibai.

Recently, I've been getting questions here and there that worry about the current state of things going, 'Are you okay? Do you still have enough jokes left for the second volume? Are you writing properly?'. As you can see however, *Netoge no Yome Onnanoka Janai to Omotta? Lv. 2* has been successfully published.

This is all thanks to the support of the readers. I'm really grateful.

For this time's volume, I was allowed to write as much as I wanted. If everyone reading was able to laugh along with this author in their work, then I need not anything else.

Again, this might be a personal matter, but just like I have mentioned in the previous volume's afterword, I too have delved into the marriage system in net games.

I've married a female character ingame, and I've divorced that same character when I found out that she was cheating on me with another unrelated female character. The reason why I found out about this was because of the incident where 'My wedding ring had the other character's name, that she cheated on me with, engraved on my ring instead of mine'.

Up until now, these wounds have still not healed.

*TL note: I'm not sure which game this is since it definitely isn't Ragnarok Online, but in Mabinogi, your partner is the one who types the custom*

*engravings on your ring when you get married. FFXI only has the option to engrave both your initials or name but since there's an option to overwrite the engrave, it's possible the other person just didn't overwrite it yet.*

**Sorry for the shout.**

And now we move on to the credits.

To the illustrator, Hisasi-san, thank you so much for the cute illustrations! This is exactly the image that I was hoping for! More than that, for going even past my ideals and giving it form like this, I am very thankful.

Also, since I love to riddle my work with jokes, often times, I would google for the source with Editor-san joining me. I may have troubled you a lot this time, but I look forward to working with you from here on as well.

While I was looking for jokes about net games, there were times that I had no idea what they were, that people would explain to me what they actually meant. And thanks to everyone who helped, this has turned out to be a fun novel. Thank you very much.

And lastly, to the readers who have purchased this book, I would like to extend my gratitude. If you happen to meet the author somewhere in a net game in the future, please treat them kindly.

And that's it. When the opportunity arises, I shall see you again soon.

This was the author, Kineko Shibai.